

ELEVENTH EDITION.

Robert B. Ramsdell
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OR,

DEADWOOD DICK JR'S DOG DETECTIVE.

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AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS,
"ROSEBUD ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AN EVENING IN HANGTOWN.

In the northern portion of the territory of Idaho, the Silverland of America, is a little camp or settlement, bearing the rather unclassic name of Hangtown! Look on any modern map and you cannot miss finding it, for although

DICK TOOK A HANDFUL OF MEAT FROM HIS HUNTING SACK, AND EXTENDED IT TOWARD THE DOG.

only a sparsely settled place, and one of no particular importance, the map artist has not let it pass him unnoticed.

It is in a spur of the Cœur d'Alene Range, and yet is hemmed in by mountains in nearly every direction, and why on earth a camp should have been planted in that out-of-the-way place, where there are seven months of winter, is probably more than the founder himself could explain.

The camp had its origin about the time of the first Cœur d'Alene mining excitement, and has grown gradually, ever since, its floating population being in excess of its permanent inhabitants and made up of the roamers along the range—hunters, prospectors, miners, gamblers, tourists and adventurers.

Being within a couple of days' ride of the railroad gives it one advantage, as it catches a large percentage of the travel going into, and coming out of the mountains; then there is a meager supply of ore in the vicinity, barely enough to supply the necessities of life to those who delve for it.

The chief income of the camp, however, is from its transient element, and, strange to say, considering its remote location, Hangtown is no "small shakes of a sporting town," and is full as lively as many another camp with less claim to notoriety or popularity.

To use that well-worn vulgarity, "it is a cold day" when there isn't some sort of a "racket" going on within the environs of the little town, and those inclined to infer that the residents proper, of Hangtown are stagnated for want of excitement and amusement, certainly reckon amiss.

Just how the camp got its suggestive name is, and is likely to remain, a matter of dispute, and consequently, a matter of individual opinion.

One resident will tell you that it got its name from the fact that a man was hung there, before the roof was finished on the first cabin; another will assure you that it was named Hangtown because, when a horse-thief was caught anywhere within a score of miles of the place, he was brought to Hangtown, given a brief hearing before the local "mayor," and then strung up; while a third will probably be willing to stake his life that the other informers are liars, and that Hangtown was so named by its first citizen one Michael Maguire, who claimed to have pulled the rope connected with the trap when Guiteau was executed.

Be all this as it may, it has no direct bearing on the thread of our story, so we will pass it by, and leave the origin of the camp's birth-name a mooted question.

Among the habitations and business-places of the camp was a hotel, known as the "Old Demijohn," several minor saloons and gaming-rooms, a couple of general stores, where various kinds of traffic were carried on, a blacksmith shop and a steam saw-mill.

As a rule, the habitations were rude log-cabins; but since the saw-mill had begun operations, a number of more respectable frame shanties had sprung into existence, including the hotel and the residence of Captain Chester, a wealthy retired army officer, who, for some reason best known to himself, had chosen to make Hangtown the abiding-place of himself and family, consisting of a profligate son and a very pretty daughter.

Being wealthy, and not constrained to lift his hand to manual labor, the captain was naturally regarded as the nabob of the town, and his children shared the aristocratic honors of being wealthy with him.

There was but one other family in Hangtown that was considered the social equal of the Chesters, and they were the Blakes—father, mother, son and daughter.

Old Jeff Blake had long been identified with the various mountain ranges as prospector, miner, hunter and trapper, and also as stage-driver; and now, when he had come to Hangtown and settled down, with a good-looking wife of eight-and-thirty, a pretty daughter of seventeen, and a son two years her senior, some surprise was expressed by old residents, who had known Jeff for years and yet never heard him speak of having a family.

He was a fine-looking old man, past sixty years of age, and his children bore him considerable resemblance.

Captain Chester was a thorough sporting man, and, since coming to Hangtown, had done considerable toward getting up athletic and other sports, invariably defraying the expenses, and entering into the contests with a zest worthy of a younger man.

He was a fine rider, an expert with sword, rifle or revolver, and quite "at home" at wrestling and boxing.

If he saw merit in a contestant at any of his tournaments, he was quick to pick him up and offer to back him against any coming man, and he most generally won.

On the other hand, while Jefferson Blake was getting too old to be anything like a rival of the captain in point of skill, he still possessed an equal amount of the sportive spirit.

And it so came about that he and the captain became opposites in betting, and often wagered large sums, where less hot-headed men would have bet nothing.

Degree by degree, a coldness had sprung up between the two capitalists, and this coldness of course extended to their families, and finally it was a well recognized fact that the Chesters and the Blakes were irretrievably on the "outs."

One pleasant evening, in the early part of June, when spring had fairly opened along the Cœur d'Alene and Cabinet mountain ranges, Hangtown was in a bustle of excitement, for Captain Chester had, with his usual liberality, arranged to give the first out-of-door sport of the season, in honor of the seventeenth anniversary of the birth of his daughter May—a sort of May festival, as it were, in which varied athletic and sporting exercises were to form a prominent feature.

Evening had been chosen for the celebration, because the air was soft and balmy, and laden with the perfume of many a wild mountain flower, the sky was clear and bedecked with myriads of twinkling starry diamonds, and the great round moon, at its very full, soared through the heavens with a regal grace, casting down a golden flood of mellow light upon the rude but picturesquely situated mountain town.

The town itself was overrun with strangers, or out-of-town visitors, attracted thither by the widely circulated report that there was to be a "reg'lar old time" at Hangtown; this "reg'lar old time" meant that the captain was to again open his purse, and make things lively for all who chose to be present; and as his liberality was famous for many a league, and his popularity unbounded, it was not strange that a crowd of men-of-the-mountains, men-of-the-plains, miners, prospectors, hunters, trappers, gamblers, fakirs, and adventurers of all sorts, should assemble to do honor to the occasion.

In fact it promised to be a festival night, for that far-out-of-the-way camp, long to be remembered.

Hangtown had been built in "good luck" or horseshoe shape, and the buildings faced upon a level open space of considerable size, which had been dubbed the "green," and which was fringed by a row of trees, there being a number of shady trees scattered about through the heart of the green.

Just within the fringe of trees, the captain had, at his own expense, laid a racetrack, while upon the green proper, were various devices for public amusement.

The army officer had spared no pains or expense to make his daughter's birthday party a success. Numbers of Chinese lanterns were strung from tree to tree; bonfires had been kindled, here and there; a stand had been erected for the discharge of fireworks; then there was another stand, capable of holding twenty-five or thirty people, which was literally covered with beds and wreaths of wild and garden flowers.

It had been arranged by the captain to have his fair daughter occupy this stand, surrounded by a bevy of the young ladies of the camp—for nearly every real resident of the camp was the proud possessor of one or more young daughters—then, to the best all-round winner of the sports that were to take place, belonged the honor of crowning Miss May Chester with a wreath of wild flowers, in honor of her seventeenth natal day.

There would, therefore, naturally be much rivalry among the younger men of the camp, for May Chester was, as we have said, a most charming girl, and he who was fortunate enough to win her, could well be credited with having made a lucky catch.

There were quite a number of strong, sturdy and worthy young men in Hangtown, among them Maurice Blake, and also Ray Rodney, who had built and owned the "Demijohn," hotel, although he had afterward leased it to one Buck Brannigan, for a term of years.

Maurice, it was known, was deeply in love with Miss Chester, but owing to the rupture between the two families, his suit was not favored by the captain.

We have mentioned the captain's son as being a profligate son, but that was a tame word for his character and actions.

Although scrupulously neat in appearance, he was a ruffian in conduct.

He drank to excess; he gambled; he was vulgar and profane in speech, and seemed devoid of all those good qualities which go to make up a man!

As the sports were not to commence until about eight o'clock in the evening the visitors and many of the residents were collected about and in the large bar-room of the Demijohn Hotel—and the theme of talk of course was—who would put the wreath upon May Chester's head.

There seemed to be a diversity of opinion as to the probable winner, but the majority decided that it must be one of the two men—Maurice Blake and Ray Rodney, who, arm in arm, were seen promenading about, together, for, though acknowledged rivals, these two young men had, since their first meeting, been on the friendliest of terms.

Both were as finely developed specimens of young manhood as one could wish to lay eyes upon; both were of light complexion, with blonde hair and mustaches, and both were about equal in regard to good looks.

"I'll wager ther drinks that Rodney don't get left!" an old miner said, as he stood upon the piazza of the hotel, and watched the two passing by, chatting pleasantly together. "An' I allow it would please ther captain ef he does, fer et strikes me he rather favors Rodney."

Although the speaker's remarks were addressed to another miner at his elbow, they also reached the ears of another person, who was leaning against a veranda-post close by—a gracefully-formed, rather flashily-attired young man, with a darkly-handsome face, and jet-black eyes, hair and mustache.

This was Charley Chester—or, as he was generally nick-named, "Chump" Chester.

"What is that you say?" he demanded, stepping forward—"what was that remark you made, Jersey Joe?"

"I said I'd bet the drinks that Ray Rodney would win the honor of crowning your sister!" Jersey replied, coolly. "Want ter bet?"

"I'll tell you what I will do," Chump replied, squinting one eye reflectively. "I'll bet you the drinks for the town that I can name the man who will not place the crown upon my sister's head!"

Jersey Joe laughed contemptuously.

"Pshaw! Thar's no use o' yer talkin' thet way, Chump," he said. "Yer got cleaned out at poker last night, an' I doubt ef ye've got enough money left ter set up ther drinks fer yer self, let alone the town."

"I ain't, eh? Well, if I ain't, the captain has," Chump replied, with a sneer. "I see you dare not bet, so I don't mind telling you who won't put the wreath on my sister's head."

"Who?"

"That low-lived skunk, Maurice Blake!"

"Humph! If he should win, he would do it!"

"But I say he would not."

"What would prevent him?"

"I would prevent him, and that mighty quick, too!"

"Bah! You know better, Chump. You haven't got spunk enough to tackle one side of Maurice Blake. The only fighting you ever do is with your mouth."

Chump uttered an oath.

"Well, you wait and see!" he said. "I'll prove to you that I'm no coward."

Jersey Joe's eyes sparkled, for he thoroughly appreciated all "fun" in the shape of a scrimmage.

"Tell you what I'll do!" he said, taking a roll of bills from his pocket. "I'll bet you a ten-dollar note you dassent step up and knock Maurice Blake's hat off! Here he comes now, in company with Rodney!"

Chump gazed at the bills a moment, then said:

"No, I won't bet you, because I've no money as small as that. I'll do it, though, if you'll agree to give me the money!"

"Ker'ect! You do it and the money is yours. It'll be worth a ten-dollar note to see you get pummeled!" Jersey Joe declared, with a chuckle.

Those who had overheard the bargain at once became interested and excited.

It would indeed be a treat to see Chump Chester brave young Blake, for, among the residents of Hangtown he was generally considered a coward.

Times innumerable, when he had insulted some one, he had been challenged to fight, but had backed out, and on several occasions had been thrashed unmercifully.

His ill-feeling toward young Blake was based on the fact that Maurice had threatened to mop the street with him if he did not desist from paying his unwelcome attentions to Maurice's sister, Mildred.

And now, when Chump descended from the piazza to the street, those who knew him wondered when he had acquired the courage requisite to knock off Blake's hat.

Blake and Ray Rodney were leisurely approaching the hotel, laughing and chatting, and apparently in the best of spirits. The former wore a stylish silk hat—the only one in Hangtown—which he had recently received from the East, and his whole appearance was extremely neat.

Chump Chester took his position so that he would be close to Blake as he passed, and waited, his right hand resting on his hip.

Presently Blake and Rodney came along; then, without a word of warning, Chump stepped quickly forward and struck the shining tile a blow that knocked it into the middle of the street.

For a moment Blake was dumfounded with surprise, but, quickly recovering, he aimed a blow at the prodigal that caught him between the eyes and knocked him down.

He was not stunned, however, for, quickly arising, he rushed forward, caught Blake by the legs, jerked his feet out from under him, and brought him heavily down upon his back.

In another instant Chump was on his enemy, and, clutching him by the throat with his left hand, he held in the grasp of his right a murderous-looking knife.

CHAPTER II.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD.

ABOUT ten miles from Hangtown in the midst of the wild mountainous landscape of the Coeur d'Alenes, was a deep, dismal gorge, through which, 'twas said, the foot of man never had trod.

The mouth of this gorge opened off the main canyon through which ran the trail to Hangtown, and was in itself, so dark and forbidding that few men, brave though they might be, would have ventured into it.

So grim and black and suggestive of uncanny things was this gorge entrance, which ran between stupendous mountain walls, seemingly into the very bowels of the earth, that it reminded one of Gustave Dore's illustration of the entrance into hell, as pictured in Dante's "Inferno."

How far the deep narrow rift extended into the gorge, or where it ended, not even the oldest or most daring ranger was able to tell, for, as far as known, no one had penetrated beyond a few hundred yards into it, where they were met by almost total darkness, and a damp atmosphere that was chilling to the bone, and caused the venturer to turn back.

However all this, one afternoon a few days previous to the occurrence of the events narrated in our last chapter, a young man stood at the mouth of this gorge, gazing thoughtfully into its dark depths.

He was young—apparently not over twenty—of medium stature, strong and athletic of build, and possessed of a round, handsome, smoothly-shaven face, keen brown eyes, and hair of a like hue, that fell in glossy waves over his shoulders.

His attire was that of a mountain ranger, and he was well armed.

This was none other than the famous young detective, Deadwood Dick, Junior, who, in more than one respect, was a living counterpart of his bold original.

There was an expression of curiosity upon his face, as he gazed into the mysterious gorge, and his thoughts found expression in words.

"This is Satan's Retreat," he said, "and 'tis said no man ever has been brave enough to penetrate into its furthest depths. A brave set of men indeed must there be in these mountains! Surely this is not an age when men ought to believe in ghosts, hobgoblins and things of that sort."

"By Jove! I'll find out what is the secret of these dark depths, if any secret exists. It shall not be said that Dick Bristol is such a coward as to be afraid of a little darkness."

With him, to think was to act, and he at once began to make preparation for the venture.

His horse stood near at hand, and he first lariatied it out, so that it could graze, while he was absent.

He next examined his revolvers and rifle, to see that they were in proper condition for service; then he filled his hunting-sack with jerked venison and biscuits, equipped himself

with a lantern and matches, and was ready for the journey.

Patting his horse upon the neck, affectionately, he then turned away, lit the lantern, and entered the mouth of the gorge.

The first few hundred yards he traversed he found no use for the lantern, as he could see the clear sky above him; then gradually the darkness came, owing to the gradual decline in the course of the gulch. Hundreds upon hundreds of feet above him towered the perpendicular walls, from which the cold water dripped, and the further the young detective went the chillier became the atmosphere.

Still he pushed fearlessly on.

The mighty hall ran in nearly a straight course, and the gradual descent seemed to continue.

In places the rift was no more than ten feet wide, then again it would widen to twenty or thirty feet.

The bottom, of course, was of rock, and remarkably free from loose stones and debris.

On, on, went Deadwood Dick—further and further, until he was confident he must have traveled at least a full mile; and still the passage continued on and downward, with no signs of coming to an end.

At last Dick came to a halt.

"Well, I'll be blazed, if this don't take my time, nothing ever did. If there is such a place as sheol, I'm of the opinion that I'm on the way to that summer resort. There seems to be no end to this dusky avenue, at any rate, and she keeps on going down, down, down! Wouldn't be a bit surprised to see a Chinaman pop into view ere long, should I continue on. Blamed if I know whether to go any further or not."

He deliberated a few minutes, in doubt what to do.

"I've gone so far—I might as well go whole hog or none!" he finally muttered, and continued on.

At least a mile further he went, without seeing any perceptible change from what he had passed through—then, suddenly, and without warning, the gorge took an abrupt turn, and he found himself in a round well-like valley, down into which shone the light of day, from far, far overhead.

Yes, the valley, or pocket, whichever it might most properly be termed, was almost barrel-shaped, and perhaps two thousand feet in circumference, the walls running perpendicularly upward many hundred feet, cold, gray, and unbroken.

No being, either human or animal, could have scaled them.

Far, far above, Dick could see the sun, shining directly down into this wonderful pitfall of nature.

The bottom of the valley was rocky as the passage had been, with only a stray bunch of weeds growing here and there.

Putting out the light in his lantern, Dick advanced wonderingly into the heart of this mountain well.

And in doing so, he made a most singular discovery.

He came upon the ashes and ruins of what had once evidently been a hut.

From appearances, however, the hut had been consumed long ago.

This was not all he discovered in that strange retreat.

Near at hand, lying upon the hard, rocky bottom, was the blackened skeleton of a child!

Evidently the bones had passed through the flames, for many of them were charred and brittle. The child had been a girl, and some six or seven years of age, judging by the skeleton.

Not far from this, the young explorer found the remains of another human being—a dwarfed man.

Fire had not done its work in this case.

The person evidently had died of starvation, for the garments, old and ragged, and the skin itself, now dried up like parchment, still clung to the skeleton; nor had the long straggling hair or beard fallen out.

As he gazed at the ghastly spectacle, Dick came to the conclusion that the dwarf had not been unprepossessing of feature, and was probably some thirty years of age at the time of his demise.

But there was no way of telling how long the man had been dead—perhaps for many years; for no decomposition had taken place, the body having simply dried and withered up.

The sight was anything but pleasing, and Dick was about to pass on, when a sudden thought struck him.

Might there not be something in the pockets of the clothing on the skeleton to identify him?

Impressed with this idea, he made search, and found a paper covered with pencil writing, which he deciphered only with considerable difficulty.

This is what he made out:

"SEPTEMBER 10, 1880.

"It is now eleven years since she left me, and ran away with him—just eleven years to-day, and I am dying.

"Just why she left me I shall never know, for I never attempted to follow him or her. We had always been so happy together until Myron Murdock came, sick nigh unto death, and out of pity we took him into our humble hut and nursed him back to life.

"He was a handsome young ranger, and I was a dwarf; perhaps that was why she left with him. I was away on a hunt at the time, and when I returned, I found that they had gone, taking with them our youngest child, Cherry, while in the smoking ruins of my humble hut, I found the fleshless bones of the eldest, Clara.

"My God! what a blow it was to me; but I was not a revengeful man, and I did not pursue them. God will attend to them in the great Hereafter.

"I fished out the bones of poor little Clara, and as they lay there now, I placed them eleven years ago. No hand has ever touched them since.

"So I have lived on, year after year, praying daily for death, and at last I feel it approaching; hence I write this. A week ago, God sent me a companion in the shape of a half-grown pup. Whither he came from I know not, but we instantly made friends, for he is a dog of vast intelligence, and I have learned him much in a few days. I showed him the blood-stained shirt Myron Murdock wore when he came to my hut, and he wagged his tail and seemed to understand. If he ever meets Murdock, he will surely know him.

"To-day I took him and showed him my pile of nuggets, and told him to stand guard over them. He is there now, as faithful as any sentinel could be.

"If you find this, call for Carlo, and take him with you. If you find Myron Murdock, you can find my daughter Cherry.

"Then kill Murdock, give half the gold to Cherry, and keep Carlo and the other half for yourself. And above all, be good to Carlo.

"This is the dying wish of
"CYRUS CLARE."

Dick read and re-read this strange message of the dead, and pondered deeply.

"What strange events each day of one's life unfolds!" he mused. "Poor Carlo is dead, or has deserted his trust, long ere this, I presume."

More out of curiosity, than aught else, he placed his fingers to his lips, and whistled sharply, several times.

"Carlo! Carlo!" he shouted.

Almost instantly afterward, he heard a patter of feet behind him, and looking around, beheld a monstrous dog standing near at hand—a shaggy, wild-eyed creature, that Dick concluded was a cross between a Newfoundland, and a mastiff.

"Come here, Carlo!" Dick said, kneeling beside the dead dwarf. "Come here, old boy!"

The dog hesitated, then advanced slowly, eyeing Dick steadfastly, without so much as wagging his tail.

Dick took a handful of meat from his hunting sack, and extended it in the palm of his hand. The dog smelled of it, and then proceeded to partake of it, ravenously.

Dick as he fed him stroked his shaggy coat, and called him by name at which the dog wagged his tail, and seemed overjoyed.

Dick then knew the compact was sealed. He and Carlo were friends.

The dog then smelled of the dwarf's remains, barked, and ran off toward a further part of the valley.

As Dick did not follow, he returned, and repeated the operation.

Concluding it was an invitation for him to follow, Dick did so.

He was led to a sort of a niche, in one side of the pit, and here he beheld a pile of golden nuggets, such as he had never beheld before, and worth many thousands of dollars.

After some deliberation, he gathered together a quantity of good size stones, and covered over the gold, so that none of it was visible.

Carlo watched the proceeding, curiously, now and then wagging his tail, as much as to say that it met his entire approval.

No wonder, after his long vigil, that he should want to see it covered over.

When he had completed the job, Dick gazed around him a few minutes, and then started for the passage entrance, without saying anything to the dog.

He went a short distance, then paused, and looked back.

Carlo had not stirred, but was gazing after him, wistfully.

"Come, Carlo!" Dick said, "come with me, Carlo!"

The noble animal instantly bounded forward,

barking and wagging his tail, from actual joy at being released from sentinel duty.

And thus the two new made friends passed from the pit on their way to the outer world.

CHAPTER III.

HUMBOLDT HARRY.

THE suddenness with which Chump Chester obtained the advantage of his enemy was a great surprise to all, for young Blake was known to be a man whom few persons in Hangtown could handle.

He had always proven himself quick, alert, and strong, was a good boxer and wrestler, and, although he was not known to carry weapons, there were few of the camp's residents who cared to draw him into a fight.

Considering, then, that Chester had always been looked upon as a man with no "sand," it was little wonder that the crowd was surprised to see him boldly face the young lion of the town, and get the upper hand of him.

And, as they beheld him bearing Blake down, with one hand clutching his throat, and the other upraised and grasping a murderous knife, they stood literally transfixed with horror, not making any effort to save the life of their townsman, who, though he struggled desperately, could not throw his adversary off, or tear away the vise-like grip upon his throat.

"Die, you dog, die!" Chump Chester cried, savagely, as he raised his murderous knife; but, at that movement, a strong hand grasped the young ruffian's arm, while the other arm wrested Chump from his victim, and seizing him by the hair of the head, laid him out on his back, while the foot of the individual who had made this timely intervention was planted upon his breast, a revolver grasped in his left hand.

And who was this who had so opportunely interfered to save Maurice Blake's life?

A finely-built young fellow, of medium stature, with a handsome, smoothly-shaven face, keen, brown eyes, and hair of the same hue, that fell in graceful waves upon his shoulders.

He was clad in a plain dark suit that fitted him perfectly, a blue flannel shirt, a broad-brim white felt hat, and top-boots.

He was a stranger in the camp, and where he came from when he sprung to Maurice Blake's rescue, would have puzzled any one to say, he appeared so suddenly.

"Let me up!" cried Chester, fiercely, but without daring to make an effort to arise. "Let me up, you hound!"

"Don't get in a hurry!" was the warning reply. "You are quite comfortable right where you are; and besides, the chap you was goin' to dissect may have a note to sing about your getting up!"

Blake had by this time regained his feet, his face pale, and his eyes gleaming.

"My friend, I thank you for interfering in my behalf," he said, advancing and extending his hand. "The attack of the assassin was so sudden that I had no chance to defend myself, and but for your timely arrival no doubt he would have stabbed me."

"No thanks are necessary!" the young stranger replied. "What do you propose to do with this butcher, anyhow? I hold him at your disposal."

"Oh! let him go!" Maurice said, with a gesture of disgust. "Maybe I'd be doing right to kill him, but having knocked him down once, I do not care to dirty my hands by touching the loafer again. Let him up!"

"Very well. Just as you say about that. I think, however, if it was my case, I'd not be so lenient! I'd mark him some way so that you'd know him again," the stranger replied, removing his foot from Chester's breast. "You may get up, butcher, and thank your stars I didn't shoot you down, myself!"

Chump scrambled to his feet, his face dark with passion.

"I'll get even with you both!" he gritted, brushing the dust from his clothes. "You may think I'm beaten, but you'll find to your sorrow that I ain't!" and then he retreated into the hotel.

"Allow me to thank you once more for your timely intervention!" Maurice Blake said, addressing his rescuer; "and also, if it will not be asking too much, I would like to ask your name."

"You may call me Humboldt Harry!" was the reply. "That handle will answer as well as any, I take it."

"Then, that is not your real name?"

"Possibly not, but what matters it? There's little in a name, anyhow, unless a sheriff is tracing up one's genealogy."

"Well, Humboldt Harry it shall be, then, and

believe me, I am glad to have met you. Do you intend to remain long in Hangtown?"

"That, I cannot say. I may stay here a day, and again, I may linger here a month. Just as the inclination strikes me, you see."

"Exactly. I infer that you came here to enter into the tournament?"

"Well, no—not exactly. I heard of it, while up in the mountains, and as I had it in mind to visit this place, I came a little sooner than I should otherwise have done, in order to take in the show."

"Well, the contests are open and free to all, and you might as well join in!" Maurice said; "the more contestants the more fun, you see. Then, too, I understand that Captain Chester intends to offer some valuable prizes, in addition to the principal honor awarded to the all-around victor, of placing a crown of flowers upon the head of his daughter!"

Maurice then turned away, to find Ray Rodney, who had so suddenly disappeared, while Humboldt Harry entered the Demijohn, and purchased a cigar, which he lit, and seated himself at one of the tables with which the bar-room was adorned.

The room was well filled with thirsty patrons, a goodly share of whom appeared to grow thirstier the more of the amber-hued "ardent" they imbibed.

Harry, of course, became a center of notice for all present, but he paid no attention to the staring crowd, and as he leisurely puffed away at his cigar, appeared wrapt in meditation.

He was not destined to be left long to his private thoughts, however, for a touch upon the shoulder aroused him from his reverie, and looking up, he beheld a man of commanding appearance standing by his side.

This was Captain Chester.

He was a fine-appearing man of about forty years, although he looked much younger, with a commanding figure and soldierly bearing, and an open, honest countenance, that spoke volumes for his good nature and genial disposition.

His eyes were dark, and piercing in their glance, and his hair and heavy mustache of a brownish hue.

He dressed neatly but not flashily, and the first impression of one who beheld him would be that he was a man of exceptional force of character.

"You will excuse me, I trust," he said, as Humboldt Harry looked up, "but I have just learned that you prevented my son from committing a murder."

"I prevented one young chap from knifing another, if that is what you have reference to," Harry replied, promptly.

"Exactly. That is what I mean. The offending party was my son."

"Indeed!" and the young stranger gave his accoster a closer scrutiny. "I infer, then, that you are Captain Chester."

"I am—Clement Chester, sir, at your service."

"I have heard of you, but do not think I ever met you before," Harry said, without making any advances for further acquaintance.

"Very likely. I'm pretty well known around these parts, for the time I have been here. What do you think of my son?"

Harry smiled.

"Well, I should say he may consider himself lucky that he got off so cheaply," was the answer. "If it had been me in the other fellow's boots, I fancy I should have taken satisfaction out of his hide if I could not get it any other way!"

"Which would have been serving him perfectly right," the captain unhesitatingly replied. "It is with regret I have to say that my son is a very bad young man, and I shall not be surprised if his career ends on the gallows. I was glad to hear that you made him knuckle under, for he is getting worse and worse every day he grows older."

"Most likely he will run against some one, one of these days, who will settle his hash for him," Humboldt Harry replied.

"I do not doubt it, and perhaps it would be better for him, for, although I have tried to reason with and make something of him, my efforts have been in vain. He seems lost to all sense of shame and honor. It was because of this I wished to speak to you. By the way, I believe I have not yet inquired your name?"

"You may call me Humboldt Harry, that being the handle I sail under at present."

"Humboldt Harry, eh? You are a detective, I take it?"

"What causes you to think that?"

"That was what I put you down for the

moment I set eyes on you. Was I right or wrong?"

"Perhaps!" Harry replied, evasively, as he took a long puff at his cigar, and sent a cloud of smoke ceilingward.

"By which reply, I take it for granted that I was not wrong, sir," the captain smiled. "I usually form a correct estimate of a person. Now, then, my friend, I trust you will not consider me obtrusive if I give you a little advice."

"Go ahead," Harry replied. "I am not so conceited as to believe that I cannot be profitably advised."

"Quite correct. That man does not live who cannot learn something, providing he isn't a fool. What I wished to say is this: If you propose to remain in Hangtown for any length of time, keep well on your guard lest you fall into a trap and lose your life."

"Indeed!"

"Just as I tell you. In humiliating my son to-night, you have made him your bitter enemy!"

Humboldt Harry smiled.

"A fig for that!" he said. "I stand in no fear of him—not in the least."

"Maybe not, but you do not know my son. He is a snake-in-the-grass who doesn't strike until he can take you unawares. He has the reputation of being an arrant coward, and is one, and it was a great surprise to every one when he assaulted Maurice Blake. I presume he would not dare to attack you openly, but he is one of those sneaking scoundrels who will wait patiently for a chance to take an unexpected advantage over you, and seek to be revenged."

"In this he is not alone, but in all his doings is more or less influenced by an enemy of mine one Jefferson Blake—the father of Maurice Blake. We two families—the Chesters and the Blakes—are the two representative families of this camp, and have been on bad terms, for some time."

"Because of the popularity I have won in getting up sporting tournaments, old Blake has become insanely jealous of me, and spends most of his time and money in trying to influence every one he can against me. He has told some pretty hard lies about me, but I have passed them by unnoticed, as I am waiting to collect evidence enough against him to put him where he rightfully belongs—in prison!"

"Ah! Then you and Maurice Blake are not on good terms?"

"Well, not particularly, although there is really no enmity between us. The fact that I have objected to Maurice's suit for my daughter's hand has no doubt caused Maurice to feel a little sore toward me; therefore he does not speak to me, and I do not feel inclined to make any advances by speaking to him."

"What objections have you to the young man?" Humboldt Harry asked.

"None, as far as the young man is individually concerned, more than that he is too poor to properly care for a wife; and again, owing to the differences existing between myself and old man Blake, I do not care to have my daughter marry into his family."

"Then, there is another thing I wish to speak to you about, providing you will acknowledge that you are a detective."

"Go ahead; I am listening! My ears are open to hear anything you may have to communicate."

"I suppose I can trust you to keep secret whatever I tell you?"

"Without a doubt. If I am a detective, as you seem to infer, you must be aware that detectives are generally a pretty close-mouthed set."

"As a rule, I presume they are, although that is not always the case. Now, what I wish to say to you is this: I have a little case I want you to take hold of and work up, and I will lend you all the assistance in my power. If you succeed, you can name your price, as I can afford to pay you a good price for your services. If you fail, even, I will pay you liberally for your time and trouble. That's fair, isn't it?"

"I do not see anything particularly unfair about it," Harry replied. "Take a seat, sir, and let me hear what you want done."

The captain drew a chair near to the table, and sat down.

"This is the first time in my life that I have ever had occasion to solicit the services of a detective," he remarked when he was seated, "and shouldn't have to now, but for the sort of antipathy existing between myself and Jeff Blake, whom I wish, if possible, to unmask and expose as the villain that I believe him to be."

"Blake, you will understand, has been nearly

all his life a mountain ranger, until about a year ago, when he came to Hangtown and settled down at his ease, bringing with him his wife and two children, where it had never been known before, even among his most intimate acquaintances, that he was a married man.

"Owing to his roving life, no one would naturally have supposed that he would have laid by much money, yet here he comes to Hangtown, builds him a house second only to my own in point of cost, and settles down with apparently an inexhaustible supply of money at his command, which he spends freely among the rougher classes of the camp, evidently seeking to secure their good will and backing for a purpose not yet fully developed.

"It is evident that he has already secured the good will of my son Charles, and influenced him against me; it is also pretty generally known that he and his own son are not on the best of terms, owing to Maurice's infatuation for my daughter May. There may be other reasons, but I think the one I have just mentioned is the most potent.

"Be that as it may, Blake has some scheme in view, to further which, he is striving to keep on the best side of the roughs and fighting element of the camp, and I sometimes believe that he eventually intends to incite a riot, and attempt to drive me and other well-disposed persons out of the place and take full charge himself."

"What could be the object in his doing that? The place is not of enough importance that any one need plot to obtain possession of it, I should say!"

"That remains to be learned. Ever since the town was located there has been a rumor that a most valuable gold mine was being operated secretly here, almost in our very midst. Just how the rumor started, I am not positive, but it has gained credence that such a mine is no myth, but does really exist, within a stone's throw of the borders of this camp."

Humboldt Harry smiled.

"If such were the case," he said, "I should think an active search would have ere this been made for it."

"So there has. I doubt if there is a resident of the camp who has spent days in scouring the neighborhood in search of the lead; but all to no avail. A great many people have wondered why I settled down in this out-of-the-way place, when, with my wealth, I could have enjoyed a more easy and luxurious existence in some more eastern locality. I don't mind telling you that it was to find this secret mine that I settled down here in Hangtown. And, although unsuccessful so far, I intend to find that mine."

"And it is with this purpose in view that you seek my services?"

"Exactly!"

"Well, Mr. Chester, I really do not see what aid I can be to you. How can you expect me to be of service when many others have failed to unearth the secret?"

"I don't know as I can really explain, more than that I have sized you up as being rather an extraordinary young man, and have confidence that if you were to take charge of the matter, the result would be highly gratifying to us both."

Harry laughed.

"Really," he said, "you appear to have more confidence in me than I have in myself."

"Perhaps I have, but, you see, I take you for a chap who once takes hold of a job will hang to it until you win, if there is such a thing as winning."

"Well, I guess you ain't far from right there. I don't generally give up an undertaking without a pretty tough struggle. But, in regard to this secret mine business, what clew have you got as a basis to begin work on?"

"I will tell you. Ever since Hangtown was a month old, an organized band of a half-dozen outlaws have been hovering about this vicinity. They are known as the Hen-Hawks. Just from what source they derive their income, I cannot say, as the semi-weekly stage that comes to, and departs from this place, never carries anything worth pillaging, and has only on one occasion been attacked. Occasionally a horse is stolen, but, even this thing happens infrequently.

"This outlaw band is said to be headed by a man known as Crimson Claw, and the general opinion here is that, while the band are ostensibly outlaws, they are really a sentry guard, doing duty, and watching out against the discovery of the entrance to the secret mine."

"Are they often seen?"

"Yes, but always are just out of rifle-range, and if pursuit is given they put spurs to their horses and disappear with astonishing quickness, their steeds seeming fairly to fly over the

ground. We have some pretty fast-running horses in this camp, but none of them stand a show in giving chase to the mounts of the Hen-Hawks."

"Do these so-called Hen-Hawks act hostile toward the residents of the camp?"

"Not openly, though it is believed they are the authors of several crimes that have been committed. A man is occasionally found dead, with his boots on, and his death is naturally laid to the Hen-Hawks. On one occasion, recently, they rode down through the town at break-neck speed, and yelling and firing right and left, thereby creating no little consternation, but doing no particular harm."

"Do they go masked?"

"Yes."

"How do they dress?"

"In knee-boots, buckskin breeches, red shirts, slouch hats and full masks, red in color and grotesque in appearance, the visage having the formation of a hawk's face. They are well armed, and their horses are as fine-looking animals as one could wish to set eyes upon."

"What sort of a looking person is the leader—that is, in stature and so forth?"

"He is rather below the average stature of man, and slenderly built. He rides as though born in the saddle, however, and has rather a dignified and graceful bearing."

"This, then, is all the clew you have for me to begin work on, is it?"

"Except a suspicion, yes."

"What is the suspicion?"

"I will explain. The longer I see Jeff Blake, and observe him with a critical eye, the more I believe him to be a villain. Maybe it is unjust of me to think in this way, but I cannot help it. And somehow I have got it into my mind that he is not only directly or indirectly connected with the Hen-Hawks, but also knows where the secret mine is located, and is most likely the chief owner of it. Else, where does he acquire all his ready cash? I myself have already won wagers from him on sporting matters, aggregating ten thousand dollars, since he came to Hangtown. It therefore stands to reason that he must have some unfailing source of finance to draw upon."

"It would seem so," Humboldt Harry assented, thoughtfully. "Providing this should be the case, do you have an idea that your son is in the secret?"

"I do not know. I should presume not, however, for I deem Blake too keen a sharper to give away so important a secret to a person of my son's character. All he wants of Charles is to make him a tool to use against me."

"Of how many persons does Blake's family consist?"

"Four—himself, his wife Agnes, his daughter Mildred and his son Maurice. Now, you take hold of this matter, and sift it through, and I will give you a thousand dollars!"

"Very well. I will make an attempt," Humboldt Harry replied. "Of course I have literally nothing to begin work on, but I will do the best I can!"

"That is all I shall expect of you, and I will lend you any assistance in my power. To crush Jefferson Blake as he is trying to crush me is the height of my ambition. But, I must be off, now, to attend to the tournament. Will you try your luck?"

"Perhaps!" Harry replied, quietly.

The captain then glanced at his watch, arose, and left the Demijohn, which was the signal for a general stampede toward the green, for every one knew that the sports were about to begin!

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANNIHILATOR.

"WHOA! thar, Prudence Cordelia, ye darned fool. Don't ye kno' we're arriv at our destarnation, consarn yer ugly picter? I'll sw'ar ter sneeze, ef I don't b'lieve ye'd keep right on, 'til ye reached ther north pole, ef I warn't erlong ter check yer perpensity fer go-ahead-ativeness. Whoa! I tell ye, or by ther great antediluvian ham-bone thet played havoc wi' old Joner, I shall hev ter chastise ye, right hyer before ther gapin' public!"

A withered-up but wiry old frontiersman, mounted upon a scrawny and decidedly ugly looking specimen of the mule race, had drawn rein in front of the piazza of the Demijohn Hotel—an odd-looking veteran, bearing the scars of many a desperate conflict, and yet with a face that habitually wore an expression of good-nature, and grim humor.

Needless to say this was Old Avalanche, the Great Injun Annihilator, and that to the many readers of this Library, this noted character needs no further introduction or description.

Avalanche it was, sure enough, mounted upon his faithful steed, Prudence Cordelia; the same Old Avalanche, who, in the early days of the original Deadwood Dick, used literally to "make Rome howl," up in the Black Hills country.

And, standing beside Prudence Cordelia, and looking as docile as a lamb, was the invincible third member of the Terrific Triangle, Jeremiah, the goat!—that animal battering-ram, of many a sanguinary conflict.

A novel spectacle the trio presented as they came to a halt, in front of the Demijohn, one that caused the crowd to stare in open-mouthed amazement.

"Whoa! I tell ye!" the annihilator sung out, although Prudence had already stopped stock-still, and appeared far from having any ambition to proceed further. "Ef ye don't stand still, ye durned Arabian charger, by the great ham-bone I'll draw my Trojan blade and cut yer liver out. Hillo, thar, galoots! How's yer think, anyhow? Nice sorter evenin' ain't it? I say, be this ther benighted burg what aire called Hangtown?"

"This is Hangtown," a miner replied.

"Ye don't tell me! Waal, I'll be hanged ef this ain't jest ther percise place I'm lookin' fer. I say, be this a temprince burg, whar ye can't git nothin' ter drink harder than rainwater?"

"I allow ef you'll take ther trouble ter size up ther noses around here you'll be able ter form an opinion 'bout et!"

"Great æsthetic ham-bone! Ef ther noses aire any criterion, I should say that reg'lar old hornet bug-juice aire as free 'round hyer as ther milk o' human kindness!" the Annihilator declared. "Tharfore, my pilgrim friend, ef you'll inform ther rum'rassler o' ther 'stablishment that a copper-lined customer wants ter see him, you'll confer an everlastin' favor upon ther Terrific Triangle—Avalanche, Jeremiah & Co., and git a drink in ther bargain, ter boot!"

"That about hits me where I live!" the miner replied, and he hastened into the bar-room of the hotel.

In a couple of minutes he reappeared, accompanied by a burly, red-headed individual, with a cherry-blossom on the end of his nose which suggested that he was his own best customer.

This was Buck Brannigan, manager of the Demijohn, and a man generally feared, as he made no hesitation in shooting any one rash enough to incur his anger.

His face always wore a sullen, ugly expression, as if he were at cross-purposes with every one he met; and he looked even more savage than usual, as he advanced to the edge of the piazza.

"Well, old man, what d'ye want?" he growled, surveying the great Triangle in evident surprise.

"What do I want?" repeated the old Annihilator. "Now, by the great ham-bone, thet's a purty question ter ax! What do I look as if I needed most, me royal rattler?"

"A coffin; and you'll want it bad, too, if you don't state yer biz without less chin music!"

"Kerect! That's the way I like ter hear a man tork—I do, by blazes. Et shows he ain't got no corsit stays a-proppin' up his back bone. What I wanted ter ask, me floatin' zephyr, is this: Hev ye erbout ther classic precincts of yer colossal calf-fay, sich a thing as a prime article o' bug-juice?"

"Plenty of it!"

"Kerect. What do yer tax for the aforesaid, per half a gallon, me noble duke?"

"Half a gallon?" echoed Brannigan, in surprise.

"That's what I said, yer majesty, and I allow ye heerd ther articulation of my arguin'-masheen!"

"You don't want no half-gallon of whisky, you old buzzard!"

"Don't, eh? Waal, neow, by ther great ham-bone, I've a golden ten that sez I do."

"Well, if you want a half a gallon of bug-juice it will make your ten look sick to get it!" Brannigan declared, grimly.

"Kerect. Now, then, I don't keer a sweet-cented or hundred-cented conternental 'bout ther cost, 'long's I git waited on in fu'st-class, bang-up style. I tell yer, ther great Terrific Triangle, Old Avalanche, Jeremiah and Co., don't do things by halves. Now, then, me clascercal comet, hev ye sech a thing as er bucket?"

"I have."

"Then, I tell ye what yer do. Ye go and spill inter that bucket, one half-gallon o' yer best bug-juice, add to et a half a pound o' sugar, and one and a half gallons of water, and fetch the same out heer, and I'll annoint ther palm o'

yer hand wi' a ten-dollar gold piece. D'ye savvy?"

Brannigan gave a grunt of disgust. "Get out, you old fool!" he growled. "You're crazy. Clear away from heer or I'll put a bullet through you."

"No ye won't!" Avalanche declared, with imperturbable coolness. "I ain't crazy, nor I ain't going hence, until I treat ther great Triangle to ther evening medicine. Ther ten aire awaitin' ye, an' ef ye don't want et just say so, and I will adjourn to some other watering-place whar I can git waited on in style."

"You don't mean to say your old mule will drink whisky?" Brannigan demanded, incredulously.

"Drink? Waal, by ther great ham-bone thet made old Joner walk cross-eyed! Ef she can't make a gallon o' mornin' cock-tail luk sick, et's because she's not dry. An' as fer me Asiatic pile-driver, thar, which same be Jeremiah, ef you've got any old tin-pans, hoop-skirts an' scrap-iron, layin' 'round loose, he'll take ther job o' removin' et ferever from this earthly hemisphere, free-gratis!"

"Well, give us your money, and you shall have the pizen!" Brannigan said. "I ain't purtickler whether I sell to a human or a hog as long as I get the tin!"

"Kerect! Hyer's yer filthy; an' now, hurry up yer taps, fer Prudence Cordelyer aire as thirsty as a camel on ther desert of Sarah!"

He tossed a gold piece to Brannigan, who immediately re-entered the bar-room.

"I tell yer, ther's nothing like keepin' on ther right side ov an Arabian war-hoss!" the Annihilator declared, addressing the gaping crowd, as he slid from his saddle to the ground. "Prudence, heer, aire purty nigh tuckered out, for we have traveled. But, jist wait till she gits some o' ther invigeratin' essence inter her stummick, an' she'll dance a hornpipe fer ye. I say, Jeremiah, ye consarned critter, how d'ye like ther looks o' things around this hyer squat, anyhow? What d'ye think o' these hyer galoots what aire assembled within ther scope o' yer vision?"

Jeremiah shook his knotty head, negatively, and stamped his foot with a sniff of apparent disgust.

"What! Don't ye take kindly to these 'ere hard-heads o' Hangtown? For shame, ye unmannerly ex-Congressman!"

"Don't yer be quite so flip in focussin' yer likes an' dislikes, or some one may take er notion to have a consanguine set-to with ye."

Jeremiah, however, didn't seem to heed his master's warning, for he continued to shake his head, much to the amusement of the spectators, and gave vent to an angry "ba-a-a!"

"Oh! I tell ye, he's a rail-splitter, fer temper!" Avalanche declared, surveying his pet with pride.

"When Jeremiah gits his back up, I tell ye things have got to hump, and no mistake. Thar's only two things will make him docile!"

"What are they?" inquired an interested observer.

"A drink of bug-juice, or a chaw of terbaccer. I say, Jeremiah, d'ye want a chaw?"

Jeremiah promptly nodded his head in assent.

"Waal, ye can't have et!" the Annihilator chuckled, "fer I haven't got any more than I want myself. Wouldn't you rather have whisky?"

Jeremiah whisked his stubby tail, and nodded again.

"Ha! ha! I tho't so. Yer a reg'lar bum, you aire. Now, ef I give ye a swig ye won't get boozzy, will yer?"

A negative nod.

"Waal, you'd better not. Ef I let ye drink out o' the bucket first, you'll leave part o' the likker for poor faithful Prudence Cordelyer, won't ye?"

Another negative shake of the head, which set the crowd in a roar of laughter.

"Oh! he's a fly chap, is that same Jeremiah!" the Annihilator chuckled. "All he thinks of is his own stummick, every time. Known thet aire goat ter git a grudge ag'in' a woman, 'cause she wouldn't give him all thar was in the house, ter eat, an' out o' revenge he'd go an' steal all ther clothes off her line, an' eat 'em up. Fact, by gracious! Hello! Here comes his nibs with the bug-juice!"

Sure enough, just then Buck Brannigan made his appearance upon the veranda, with a pail in hand.

No sooner did Jeremiah espy the burly bartender, than he made a flying leap that carried him to the piazza, whence he made a rush for the pail, and tried to thrust his head down into it.

"Don't let him touch the whisk!" Avalanche

cried, quickly, with a merry twinkle in his eye. "Here, quick! give it to me!"

Brannigan obeyed, and the Annihilator received the pail.

This appeared to highly incense Jeremiah, who had evidently calculated on having the first drink, for he stamped his foot several times, shook his head, and backed off, with an indignant ba-a-a, expressive of his disgust at being defeated.

The next instant, however, he was seen to clear the floor and shoot forward through the air. His sledge-hammer head coming in contact with a rear portion of Brannigan's anatomy, that individual went headforemost off the piazza, into the street where he lay sprawling in the dirt.

A yell of laughter went up from the crowd, such as was never before nor probably never again will be heard within the precincts of Hangtown.

Brannigan sustained no serious injury by his sudden plunge, and quickly regained his feet, with a fearful string of curses.

Seeing that Jeremiah had backed off, preparatory to making another assault, the host of the Demijohn became thoroughly alarmed, and thinking only of his personal safety, he quickly took refuge on the back of Prudence Cordelia, where he crouched on hands and knees, making a most ludicrous spectacle.

For a couple of minutes he made the air blue with profanity; then, realizing his awkward position, and that he was the laughing stock of the crowd, he burst into laughter himself.

"See here, old man!" he cried, addressing Old Avalanche, who was nearly cracking his ribs with laughter. "If you don't call off that condemned goat I'll put a bullet through him!"

"Enough! Jeremiah!" the Annihilator cried. "Let the gentleman alone. You kin git off the hoss, now, sir. Jeremiah won't tech ye when I tell him ter quit!"

Brannigan accordingly dismounted, and returned to the piazza, the goat having capered away to his master's side.

In the mean time, Avalanche was allowing Prudence Cordelia to drink out of the pail, which she did, with evident relish.

When the contents were a little over half-consumed, the Annihilator placed the pail on the ground.

"Thar, now, Jeremiah, ye onmannerly brute, ye can pitch in and help yourself!" he said. "Thar's enough left ter make ye feel as ef yer mother-in-law had come ter visit you!"

Jeremiah surveyed the pail a moment, contemptuously, if such a thing might be as contempt "ba-a-a," he hauled off, and butted the pail into the middle of the street, which was as good as saying that he was not in the habit of drinking after a mule.

"Now, jest look at that!" cried Avalanche. "By ther great ham-bone, I never seen ner heard tell o' sich independence! Jeremiah, ye durned good-fer-nothing scoundrel, ye order be licked within an inch o' yer life. Ye'r gettin' entirely too big fer yer pelt, you aire! Now, do you go straight an' fetch that pail to me."

Nodding his head, Jeremiah walked sedately over to the pail, but, instead of obeying orders, he proceeded to butt the offending article all over the street.

By the time he had satisfied his grudges against it, the pail was a total wreck.

Just then, the loud blare of a trumpet was heard, coming from the green, and as of one voice, the cry went up:

"The tournament! the tournament!"

Then there was a general stampede toward the scene of the evening's sport!

It was to be a red-letter night for Hangtown, and the denizens of that far-off camp did not mean to miss any of the enjoyment.

CHAPTER. V.

HARRY'S BIG HUNDRED.

CAPTAIN CLEMENT CHESTER was not a man to attempt an undertaking, and leave it half done.

This was evident from the preparations made for the celebration of his May's seventeenth birthday.

Indeed, these preparations had been in progress for several weeks, so that everything would move off smoothly at the proper time.

The better portion of the green had been roped off, in a circular form, as it was within this ring that the sports and pastimes were to take place, the spectators, with a few exceptions, being required to keep outside the ropes.

To enforce this order, the Hangtown Vigilance Committee had been placed on patrol duty, just

inside the ring, with orders to eject any offender who refused to comply with the rules.

This Vigilance Committee was of recent organization, numbered a dozen able-bodied men, every one of whom was known to be courageous and good fighters, and was captained by a burly borderman called Lion Luke, who had done similar service, years before, in the feverish days of the Pike's Peak excitement.

The green, to-night, presented a holiday appearance, for not only was there light furnished by great numbers of Chinese lanterns, but bonfires had been kindled here and there, and colored fires burned luridly, at regular intervals.

Among those within the ring, upon the ground, were about a dozen stalwart sons of the frontier, who had entered to compete for the honors of the evening.

Besides the flower-decked stand erected for May Chester and her bevy of attendants, and the one from which the fireworks were to be discharged, three other stands had been put up.

One was occupied by Captain Chester, the second by a committee of five judges, and the third by a delegation of the leading citizens who had been honored by an invitation from the captain.

It was noticeable that both Jefferson Blake and Chump Chester were prominent among this delegation, despite the fact that no invitation had been extended to them by the captain. If the latter noticed their presence, he probably chose to allow them to remain, rather than create a disturbance by having them ejected.

When the crowd had collected outside the ropes in answer to the trumpet call, Captain Chester mounted his stand, and by a wave of his hand, enjoined silence, which was promptly accorded.

Then, in a loud, resonant voice, he delivered the following address:

"Ladies and gentlemen of Hangtown: Once more it gives me pleasure to cater to your amusement, by giving to you a tournament of sports and pastime, the present occasion being the seventeenth anniversary of my daughter's birth.

"I have spared no pains to make to-night's celebration a success, and have arranged a programme, which I trust will please you all, carried out, as it will be, by some of our skillful athletes and sporting young men, as well as by several persons who have volunteered to take part in the exercises from out of town.

"If there are any other persons not now in the ring, who wish to enter the contest, they may step forward before the tournament begins.

"As has been announced, one of the honors of the evening will be that of placing a wreath of flowers upon my daughter's head, the same to be accorded to the man who proves himself the winner of the most contests to be competed for. In addition, the said winner will be the recipient of a gold-plated rifle, which I have had made to order especially for this occasion.

"To the second best man, \$100 in cash will be given. To the third best, a gold watch.

"Five competent judges have been chosen to render impartial decisions, and I trust the spectators will remain orderly, and not attempt to interfere with the sports or exercises in any way.

"The feats to be indulged in are as follows:

"First: Rifle shooting at two hundred yards, at bell target, best number of bells out of one hundred shots. Second: Revolver shooting, distance fifty yards, best number of bells out of twenty. Third: Foot race around the ring. Fourth: Longest standing jump. Fifth: Best running jump. Sixth: Best number of hand-springs around the ring. Seventh: Riding the bucking burro, Climax, without being thrown. Eighth: Heaviest lifting dead weights. Ninth: Race around the ring on horseback, three times around. Tenth, and last: Most difficult feats of equestrianism.

"The public will bear in mind that to be a winner of any of the prizes each contestant must participate in every one of these several tests, or at least make an attempt at it.

"At the conclusion of the contests, the winner will be declared by the judges, and the man who gains first place will place the wreath upon my daughter's head, and escort her to supper at my residence, prior to which the fireworks will be set off."

A cheer went up at this point.

"I have to add in conclusion," the captain pursued, as soon as quiet was restored, "that the candidates for honors this evening, are as follows:

"Ray Rodney, Jack Hunter, Bill Hunter, Henry Holt, Spring Bill, Jersey Joe, Mike Malone, Ned Norris, Denver Dave, Skyrocket,

the half-breed, Maurice Blake and Saul Slensby, and that Mr. Rodney has volunteered to lead the spots. If there is any other party who wishes to compete, let him enter the ring and I will announce him."

The words had scarcely left the captain's lips when into the ring sprang no less a personage than Old Avalanche, followed by his inseparable companion, Jeremiah.

Those who had seen the veteran at the Demijohn immediately sent up a rousing cheer, which was acknowledged by a sweeping bow.

"Ef yer hev no objections, me royal duke," said the Annihilator, as he approached the captain's stand, "I'd like to have a finger in this pertic'ler piece o' pie."

"No objections at all, sir," the captain replied. "What might your name be?"

"Waal, et might be Dennis," the Annihilator responded with a grin, "but, allee samee, et ain't, by er long shot. In ther places whar I am most generally conspicuous about grub-time, I'm generally known as Old Avalanche, the Great Injun Annihilator, an' ther stroke oar o' ther Terrific Triangle, at yer service!"

"Exactly. Ladies and gentlemen, Old Avalanche will be the thirteenth contestant. Now, who else desires to enter?"

In response to the call, Humboldt Harry sprang over the ropes, and wended his way leisurely into the ring.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Humboldt Harry, at your service!" announced the captain. "Who, now, is the fifteenth man?"

But number fifteen did not materialize, and after waiting a few minutes, the captain called out:

"There seems to be no one else desirous of entering the contest, so we will delay no longer. If you will cast your gaze toward the young ladies' stand, I will take pleasure in introducing to those of you who never have seen her, my daughter, May, in whose honor the fete is given!"

As he spoke, a bevy of girls made their appearance upon the flower-decked stand, all attired in white, and foremost of the lot, was a gracefully-formed maiden, with a fair, perfectly chiseled face, and sunny hair—a beauty, in every sense of the word—such as one would little expect to find in that far-away locality.

Instantly, every hat was doffed, and a ringing cheer went up, to which greeting the captain's daughter made a courtesy, and then became seated, surrounded by her maids of honor.

"The tournament will now begin," the captain announced, "Mr. Rodney leading off, in rifle-shooting. Each man will continue to fire as long as he rings the bell. When he misses, he drops out and gives way to the next man!"

The target was two hundred yards away, and sufficient light had been provided so that the bull's-eye was plainly distinguishable.

Rodney, supplied with a number of repeating-rifles, took his position at the marksman's goal, and at a signal from the judges' stand, began to fire, one shot following another, in rapid succession.

"Ring! ring! ring!" responded the target bell every time, and when the dashing proprietor of the Demijohn had emptied two Winchester rifles without missing a bell, the crowd began to grow enthusiastic, and betting began to be indulged in quite freely.

At the forty-fifth shot, Rodney missed and had to give away to the next man, who only scored eleven.

After that, up to the tenth man, the shooting was tame, no one scoring over twenty.

Number ten, Skyrocket, did a little better, ringing forty-nine bells, but receiving no particular applause.

The crowd evidently expected better shooting yet.

There was a flutter of expectation and excitement when Maurice Blake stepped forward to the goal.

Even May Chester was seen to rise from her seat, and watch eagerly for the result.

Blake appeared perfectly calm, and among the crowd bets were freely called ten to one, that he would win the rifle match, but with but few takers.

Blake never drank any liquor; the people knew his nerves were steady.

Old Avalanche and Humboldt Harry had drawn near together, and were conversing.

"Now, look out for some good work," the latter said, as Blake took his position. "I allow we won't stand much of a show, after that fellow gets through."

"Humph! Ye never see'd me shute yet!" Avalanche replied. "Don't get weak in yer

narves, boyee! Let the chap go ahead. Ef he goes ninety-nine, I'll go him one better."

"And if you do that, I'll take a rifle in each hand, and beat you both!" Harry laughed.

It may be mentioned here again, that Captain Chester had left nothing undone. Not only had he furnished plenty of good rifles for exchange, in case, from continuous firing, a weapon got too hot for use, but he had also provided a man to reload the discharged weapons.

Blake started off with rapid firing, and the continued ding! ding! ding of the target bell spoke well for his true aim.

No particular enthusiasm was manifest, until he had passed Skyrocket's score; then, as he changed rifles, and continued firing, the people began to grow excited.

When, after the eightieth shot he paused to resume possession of his own weapon, which had cooled off, thunders of applause resounded on every hand.

It seemed reasonably sure that he would run out the full score of one hundred without a miss.

A breathless silence followed, when he raised his rifle to make the eighty-first shot.

He made it.

And then went on rolling up the score, until the sixteen shots in his rifle had been fired.

The score now stood ninety-six!

He seized another rifle, took deliberate aim, and fired.

The bullet became embedded in the target, two inches from the bell!

The miss did not appear to disconcert the young man in the least, for he laid down his rifle, and retired with good grace.

"A thousand to one that ninety-six wins!" cried Captain Chester. Taken or not, gents?"

"Taken!" shouted Jeff Blake, from the spectators' stand, "and I'll give a thousand to the man who makes the highest score above ninety-six!"

Slensby was next at the goal, and made the score of two bells, for which he received a derisive cheer!

"Old Avalanche!" called out the captain.

"On deck!" the Annihilator sung out, as he strode forward, rifle in hand. "By ther great ham-bone, ef I don't beat ninety-six, I'll go chuck my carcass inter a prairie dorg's hole, an' play mumbly-peg wi' ther rattlesnakes. Hyer, you Jeremiah!"

"Baa-a-a!" answered Jerry, trotting forward.

"Now, lookee hyer, Jeremiah!" said the Annihilator, "I'm goin' ter beat ninety-six, an' I want ye ter be referee. D'ye think I kin do et?"

Jerry shook his head negatively.

"What! Consarn yer imperdent picter, heven't ye seen me score two hundred lots o' times?"

Another shake of the head negatively.

"Waal, I'll be durned! 'Pears to me ye'r kinder goin' back on ther old man, Jeremiah!"

This time, an affirmative nod, and a discordant "baa-a-a."

At which the crowd roared with laughter.

"Oh! I know what's stickin' in Jeremiah's crop!" the Annihilator declared, addressing the crowd. "I give my fiery untamed steed a drink o' whisky, first. Ain't that it, Jeremiah?"

Again, an affirmative nod.

"Oh! Jeremiah ain't no fool, ef he aire a high skule graduate," Avalanche concluded, as he took up his rifle.

It was evident from the expressions upon the faces of the spectators, that but little was expected of the old vet.

But, they were destined to be surprised.

Raising his rifle, the Annihilator began firing, deliberately, and by no means as fast as the others had done.

Nevertheless, the bell rung distinctly for every shot he made, and as fast as he emptied one rifle he was handed another, and resumed firing, as coolly as if he were simply firing into blank space, instead of a bull's-eye smaller than a silver half dollar.

When he had reached his eighty-fourth shot, and took a new gun, the excitement became intense.

Men shook money in the air, by the fistful, and the betting ran literally crazy.

Once more Avalanche began firing, now a little more rapidly, and the bell responded every time.

Until the ninety-eighth shot, when the bullet became buried in the wood, less than a quarter of an inch from the bull's-eye.

The Annihilator had beaten Maurice Blake's score, but had failed to ring the hundredth bell.

Would Humboldt Harry do it?

This was a question hard to answer.

The excitement, now, was at fever heat, and it was all the Vigilantes could do, to hold the crowd back, at the point of the revolver, and prevent them from breaking into the ring.

Both Captain Chester and Jeff Blake, greatly excited, leaped down from their respective stands, and advanced into the ring.

"Give me my thousand dollars!" shouted Blake.

"Here it is!" Chester promptly replied, tossing him a bunch of notes, "and, now, I'll bet any man, or a dozen, five thousand dollars apiece, that Humboldt Harry beats the score made by old Avalanche!"

"I'm your man!" Blake cried, quickly. "Put up yer boodle in the hands of Ray Rodney, and I'll kiver it, quicker'n lightnin'!"

The wager was quickly placed and "mounted," and then Captain Chester drew another big roll of bills from his pocket—he had evidently come prepared to win or lose—and cried out:

"Another chance here, to any one who wants to make or break. Five thousand, even, says that Humboldt Harry is winner of the majority of the other contests of the tournament!"

Jeff Blake hesitated a moment, as if debating with himself, whether or not he had better go any deeper.

Then, he cried out:

"It's a bargain. I take you!"

CHAPTER VI.

WINNER ALL AROUND.

HUMBOLDT HARRY, now that he was the last man to shoot, became a person of much account, and was the center of attraction for all eyes.

He made no move to begin his work with the rifle, until the boisterous conduct of the crowd should have somewhat abated.

He had fully expected that Old Avalanche would top off the score with the hundredth shot, and therefore he had made no particular calculation that he would be put to any extra effort himself.

Now, however, that so much money had been staked upon him, by the enthusiastic captain, he realized that it was incumbent on him to do all he could to win.

When quiet had been somewhat restored, he examined the stock of rifles on hand, and picked out such as he regarded with most confidence, laying his own trusty weapon aside for the finish.

Then, at the given signal, he turned to the captain.

"Do I have the privilege of shooting in any position I please, so long as I keep at the goal?" he asked.

"Certainly," was the reply; "but I trust you won't try any risky shots, remembering I have a large sum of money wagered on the result."

"I didn't tell you to, and you were foolish to do it, not knowing whether I could hit the side of a barn or not. So, if you lose, it's your own fault, not mine," was the prompt reply, which evidently nettled the captain a little, for he turned away.

Harry then began firing with unprecedented rapidity, jets of flame seeming to leap from the barrel of his weapon each and every second.

And ding! ding! ding! went the target-ball every time he pulled the trigger—so fast, in fact, that it was difficult to count the rings.

Every one watched with breathless silence.

Steadily the score rolled upward toward the number necessary to decide the contest.

Steadily the young detective continued to fire, never lowering rifle until every shot was out of it.

A mounted piece of artillery could not have maintained a steadier and more unvarying position than did his rifle.

He neither looked to the right nor the left until the eightieth shot had been fired; then he paused and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

He then picked up another rifle and fired sixteen more shots, after which he took possession of his own weapon.

Examining it to see that it was in perfect working condition, he turned his back to the target, placed the rifle over his shoulder, and, looking into a small hand mirror, fired.

Ding! went the bell.

He next placed the weapon between his legs, and bending over to get a sight along the barrel, fired.

True to his aim, the bullet sped on its errand, and rung the bell!

Still standing with his back to the target, he

rested the barrel upon top of his head and fired, without using the glass!

And once more did the bell respond.

While the crowd gave a thunder of applause.

Bowing his thanks, Humboldt Harry turned to make his final shot.

Taking the gun in the grasp of his left hand, he held it out at arm's length, and fired.

And for the hundredth time, the bell rung out its message, proclaiming victory.

For a moment, thereafter, the very ground fairly trembled, so boisterous was the applause.

Almost dancing with delight Captain Chester ran forward and grasped Harry by the hands, and showered upon him all the praise that he could find words to express, and Old Avalanche, Maurice Blake and Ray Rodney hastened to follow his example.

As soon as he could free himself, Harry walked over to where Jeff Blake was standing, swearing at a fearful rate.

"I believe, sir, I am entitled to the thousand dollars you offered to the man making the highest score?" he said, pleasantly.

"You do, eh?" Blake growled. "Waal, me fine feller, you just go off by yerself and whistle till you get it!"

"Don't you intend to pay it?"

"Nary's the time. Why, cuss yer impudence, didn't ye jest lose five thousand dollars for me?"

"That's nothing to me. If you don't fork over the thousand dollars I'll most likely do my level best to lose you another five thousand!"

"Oh! ye will, hey?"

"That's what I said!"

"Well, I'll bet ye won't, you young devil!" And without an instant's warning the ex-mountaineer whipped a revolver from his belt.

Before he could use it, however, he was struck in the rear by something decidedly hard, and was sent sprawling to the ground.

The "something hard" was nothing more or less than the battering-ram head of Avalanche's goat, Jeremiah.

Evidently comprehending the danger that menaced the young detective, and at Old Avalanche's suddenly uttered "Hist!" he had seen fit to take a hand—or, rather, a head, in the game, himself.

Before Blake could arise, Humboldt Harry sprung upon him and disarmed him, giving his weapons into the custody of Maurice.

"Now, you old cuss, you can get up!" he cried, "and let me give you a needful warning, right here, that if you ever attempt to pull a pop on me again, I'll knock the daylight out of you. Git up, and go back to your seat in the stand, or I may take a notion to give you a thrashing right here."

Blake arose, looking decidedly crestfallen, and hurling a vindictive curse at the young champion, he strode away toward the stand, following the line indicated by Harry's outstretched hand.

This caused the crowd to give another hoot of laughter, they appearing to comprehend the situation.

The revolver shooting-match next took place, and Humboldt Harry scored highest, Ray Rodney next with Avalanche a good third.

The third contest, a foot-race around the ring was won by Harry, first, Maurice Blake, second, and Skyrocket, third.

Contest Number 4, longest standing jump: Humboldt Harry, first, Old Avalanche, second, Maurice Blake, third.

Number 5, running jump: Harry, first, Skyrocket, second, Maurice Blake, third.

Number 6. This was won by Harry alone, as evidently none of the others were able to turn hand-springs; at least, none of them attempted to.

For the seventh act an ugly looking burro was led into the ring, and each of the contestants tried his hand, but it was no use.

Mr. Burro came out victor by throwing off every one who tried to ride him, Humboldt Harry included.

Act eight, the lifting of heavy weights resulted in Skyrocket gaining first place, Slensby second, and Rodney third.

Act nine was an exciting race, with but four contestants, viz., Humboldt Harry, mounted upon his horse, Blazes; Old Avalanche on Prudence; Rodney on Fair Face, and Maurice Blake on May, which latter animal he had named after Miss Chester.

The start was neck and neck, and Harry had the outside.

The first time around the horses kept as they had started; then Old Avalanche gave a wild whoop, and Prudence Cordelia was seen to straighten out and shoot to the front, and gain the inside track.

A cheer went up, for it appeared that the scrawny animal was indeed a flyer, and the weakened liquor she had drank appeared to have done her a power of good.

When the second circuit was finished, Avalanche was a good five lengths ahead, Humboldt Harry second, and Maurice Blake third, Rodney having withdrawn, owing to his horse making a bad break.

But Avalanche was not destined to win.

At the beginning of the last round Harry's superb horse was seen to gain visibly, and when the home stretch was reached he shot ahead half a length, and held that position to the finish.

The last act on the programme had but one performer, and that was the young stranger.

He gave some remarkable exhibitions of riding in different positions, and of making running jumps onto the back of his horse, somerseting, riding at breakneck speed and balancing his body horizontally on one hand, and other feats of equestrianism peculiar only to trained circus performers.

His last act was to turn a somerset, and land on his feet on the back of the horse, after which he waved his hand to the audience and dismounted.

"Hurrah!" shouted Captain Chester. "Three rousing cheers for Humboldt Harry, the Hurricane!"

And they were given with a vengeance.

CHAPTER VII.

A DISCOVERY.

THE tournament was over, with the exception of the fireworks, and Humboldt Harry was the hero of the hour.

He was first winner of all but two of the sports, so the judges announced, and was entitled to the honor of placing the crown of flowers upon the head of pretty May Chester, and also of conducting her to a supper that had been prepared in her honor, at her father's house.

Gladly would either Ray Rodney or Maurice Blake have given a round sum of money for the same privilege.

The second and third prizes were accorded respectively to Old Avalanche and Maurice.

As soon as the race was over, the exhibition of fireworks began, and while they were in progress, Captain Chester approached Harry, bearing in his hand the gold-plated rifle.

"My young friend!" he said, "allow me to congratulate you on your success. You are simply a wonder, and I am proud to have added you to my list of acquaintances. I felt sure I was placing my money on a safe thing when I bet on you as all around winner, and you can depend on it you will lose nothing, by securing my friendship. I now take pleasure in presenting to you this rifle, which was made especially by my order, and I trust and hope that by using it, you may win many another tournament, and continue to maintain your standing as the crack rifle-shot of the West!"

Humboldt Harry responded in a felicitous manner, and then, when the fireworks were over, Captain Chester said:

"If you will accompany me, now, I will present you to my daughter, after which we, and a few invited friends, will adjourn to my residence, where supper is waiting."

"One moment, Mr. Chester," the young champion said. "Would you deem it impudent of me if I were to ask a favor of you?"

"Certainly not, sir, certainly not. I'll grant you a thousand favors, if you like!"

"I am not solicitous of so many as that, as I would not know how to place them all!" Harry replied, with a smile. "What I wanted to ask, is this: Who are to be your guests at supper?"

"The gentlemen who occupy yonder stands—with the exception of Jeff Blake and my son—together with their families. Also, Mr. Rodney."

"You have not invited Maurice Blake, then?"

"No."

"May I ask you to do so?"

Captain Chester looked surprised.

"Why, I don't know. Your question rather puzzles me. Perhaps you are not aware that Blake is not on my list of visitors?"

"Maybe not, sir, but I have taken quite an interest in the young man, and if not asking too much, I should be pleased to see him form one of the supper party."

"Yes! Well, now, my friend, I would gladly grant you 'most any other favor, but really, I think you are asking a little too much!" Chester replied. "I have already invited your friend, the Annihilator, but as for Blake—well, I would prefer he remain away."

"Oh! well, of course, you know your own wishes best," Harry replied, coolly. "I do not want you to go contrary to your will, and, on the whole, I guess you had better appoint Mr. Rodney to fill my place."

"What?"

"You heard what I said, I think. You see, I am not very much of a society man, and should feel rather out of place among a bevy of young ladies. No doubt Rodney would appreciate the opportunity I leave open for him."

The captain's brow became knitted in a scowl.

"See here," he said, "I see into this matter, now. You as good as say that if I don't extend an invitation to Maurice Blake you also will remain away!"

"Did I say so?"

"Not in so many words. But, that is what you mean."

"You must be your own judge, as for that. I would much rather, in any event, that you would appoint some one to fill my place. I did not enter the tournament for any other purpose than the sport of it, and I am quite satisfied. And, as the winner of ten thousand dollars, I do not see any reason why you should kick."

The captain shrugged his shoulders, and walked away, without making any reply.

Harry smiled to himself, as he turned to unsaddle Blazes.

"I thought that would be a rubber!" he muttered. "The gallant captain is as stubborn as a mule, and it will gall him like the dickens, if he has to knuckle under—for I hardly believe he will let me off, at any hazard. He's sour on young Blake, that's evident, and without just cause, it appears to me. I don't see any flies on the fellow, nohow."

When he had prepared Blazes for the stable, he gave him in charge of an ostler, who led him away. Then, shouldering his rifle, Harry was about to set out for the hotel when he was again approached by Chester.

"No you don't," the captain said, laying hold of the champion's arm. "You don't get off so easy as that, not by a jugful! I've fixed matters all satisfactory, and now you've got to carry out your part of the programme. Let me have your rifles, and I'll get a man to take them to the hotel."

"Have you invited Blake?" Harry asked.

"I have, and he will be present. So that settles the whole matter."

He gave the rifles into the charge of a miner, and then, locking arms with the young detective, the captain escorted him toward the floral stand, around which a crowd had already collected.

The two men entered the stand, and Harry received an introduction to Miss Chester, and also to the other young ladies.

Then, with a few appropriate remarks, he placed the wreath of flowers upon Miss Chester's head, amid the enthusiastic cheers of the crowd.

Directly afterward, the little party left the stand, and proceeded toward the captain's residence, which was located on the outskirts of the camp, May leaning upon Harry's arm, while the other girls were escorted by young men of the town.

"Oh! sir, I am so glad you won!" May said, confidingly, as she and Harry walked a little ahead of the rest. "My! but I never saw such wonderful shooting. And your other feats were equally remarkable. It must have taken you a long time to learn to do all those things!"

"Oh! not long," Harry replied. "A great deal of that sort of sport comes natural to me!"

"Mr. Blake did very nicely, too, didn't he?"

"Excellent. I expected even better from him than what he did accomplish, and if I am not mistaken some one else did, too, eh?"

May flushed rosy.

"Why, what makes you think that?" she asked.

"Oh! I've got eyes in my head," Harry laughed, "and I noticed how much you were interested in Maurice's exploits, and drew the inference that you would be considerably elated if he came out general winner."

"Well, since you have been so observant, perhaps I would have been pleased, Mr.—"

"Bristol is my real name. I thought such would have been the case, Miss Chester, and had I seen any probability of his scoring ahead of Old Avalanche, I should have taken particular pains to have let him come in first winner."

"But that would not have been right, sir. Fair is fair, you know in any game, and you certainly deserved to win. You know, papa and Maurice are not on very good terms—that is, papa don't like Maurice, and—"

"It makes it rather unpleasant for you," Harry smiled, with a twinkle in his eye. "It's

too bad, sure enough. But, I think matters will shape around all right directly. The captain has at least given in enough to invite Maurice to supper to-night."

"Oh! Mr. Bristol, this cannot be true! You are joking!"

"Not a bit of it. I never play the joker, except when at the card-table. Mr. Chester assured me, but a few minutes ago, that Maurice would be present."

"Then, it was you, sir, who induced him to extend the invitation?"

"What makes you think that?" Harry asked, with a laugh.

"Because I know papa well enough to say that he would never have invited Maurice unless some powerful influence were brought to bear upon him!"

"Well, I'll be frank with you. I did ask him to invite your lover, and, after some hesitation, he acceded to the request."

"Oh! sir, I thank you very much," May said, gratefully. "Perhaps, as you say, now that the ice is broken, all will come about right."

When the Chester residence was reached, all hands adjourned to the dining-room, where a bountiful repast was served, fit for a king.

By a little maneuvering, Harry managed it so that he and his fair partner were seated opposite Maurice and Old Avalanche, who had come in together, and as a result, the quartette were soon chatting pleasantly.

Of course Old Avalanche was the life of the party, for with his odd expressions, dry humor and preposterous yarns, he kept every one laughing.

After supper there was dancing and social games, in which Humboldt Harry took an active part.

Finally, however, growing a trifle wearied, and missing May and Maurice, he entered the cosy parlor and sat down.

Picking up a photograph album, he began to turn over the leaves, and examine the pictures, with idle curiosity.

Suddenly he came to an old-fashioned card photograph, the sight of which caused him to give vent to an exclamation of surprise.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLAKE AND CHUMP.

As may naturally be supposed, the tournament had not ended to the satisfaction of one man, at least, and that man was Jeff Blake.

Blake, who was a man over fifty years of age, was one of those persons who find it convenient to be at cross-purposes with the world in general.

He had a peevish, irritable temper, and once his ill-will was incurred, he was an enemy for a lifetime.

Not only was he enraged because his own son had not won even the third place in the tournament, but also because he was out the round sum of nine thousand dollars.

It was true Captain Chester had given the tournament, and spared no pains to make it a success, but, in reality, Blake had paid for it, several times over, and leaving something in the captain's pocket besides.

This was the galling part of it, and it so infuriated the ex-ranger that he scarcely could find words to express his rage.

When the fireworks were over, the crowd made a bee-line for the different saloons.

Not so with Jeff Blake and Chump Chester, for after the green was cleared and the lights had all died out, they still remained sitting in the spectators' stand.

"You ought to be shot!" Blake cried, savagely. "You've no more gumption than a hog!"

"You talk foolish!" Chester replied. "I'd like to know what you take me for anyhow. Supposing I had shot the feller—where'd I be, now? I ain't fond o' hemp puddin'!"

"Bah! no one would 'a' touched you!"

"Wouldn't they? Oh, well, you can think that way just as much as you please. My neck is worth more to me than it is to any one else, and I propose to look out for its safety. Some fellers may like to be lynched, but none of that on my platter, if you please!"

"But I tell you no one would have touched you if you had shot him!" argued Blake. "Maybe you might have been arrested for a few hours, but I could easily have got you out of the scrape. As matters stand now, I am out just nine thousand dollars through depending on you!"

"And I'm in just one neck!" Chump declared. "Of course nine thousand dollars is a big sum of money to you, but a neck in proper working order is worth more to me!"

"The devil take your infernal neck! It's of no earthly account anyhow. Neither are you. Curse the luck, anyhow. This is the biggest victory Captain Chester has ever scored over me, and he'll crow over it more than a little."

"You bet he will."

"But wait! I'll cut his crow short, see if I don't! I'll show him that Old Jeff Blake is an enemy not to be despised."

"Kerect. I would if I was you. I don't bear the gov'nor any good-will, you can bet, since he forbid me the house, an' I'm in with you to get square with him, providing you stick to your agreement with me."

"Of course I will stick to it, if you prove yourself of any use to me! It don't 'pear as ef you are any account, or else you would have shot that cuss, Humboldt Harry."

"Oh, let up on that!" Chump growled. "If you think I'm a cussed fool, you get left. I know about what kind of shoes I stand in, it happens, and that there's plenty of people in Hangtown who would like to have hold of the rope that yanked me up to the limb of a tree. Why, cuss it! even the dogs are beginning to show their teeth at me when I get near them. But, as you say, wait. Chump Chester has always been looked upon as a coward; but he ain't no longer, if he ever was, and he's got a grudge ag'in' a few persons which will be wiped out when they least expect. And Maurice Blake is one of the few!"

Old Jeff shrugged his shoulders, and smiled, rather disagreeably.

"Look out you don't get wiped out yourself!" he warned. "Of course I've nothin' to do with your quarrels with Maurice. If he was my own son, of course it would be different; but, as I hinted to you on another occasion, he is not my own son, but a boy whom in his younger days I adopted from the poor-house because I took a fancy to him. That was when I was a goody-goody man."

This last clause was added with a harsh, grating laugh.

"Does he know he is not your son?"

"Yes, but does not know that any one else knows it."

Chump Chester's eyes twinkled at this, but he gave no verbal expression to what his thoughts were.

"I'm afraid you can't make Mildred do as you have promised me," he said, abruptly changing the subject.

"I can't, eh? Well, don't let that fret you!" Blake replied, with a grim chuckle—"don't let that fret you in the least. She knows me, and what I order she obeys—rest assured of that! She'd be foolish to disobey me!"

"Very well. As long as I win her, I'm not particular what price I pay!" Chump declared. "You're the leader, and I've already pledged myself to help carry out any plans you may get up so far as I am able."

"Well, that is all that is required. You do so, and I promise you that Mildred shall be your wife as soon as I succeed in ruining Captain Chester and driving him out of this camp. Furies! how I hate the man!"

"You have never told me yet, particularly, why," Chump suggested.

"Oh! you'll find out soon enough, never fear. The war between us has not yet fairly begun, mind you. Don't you think you can get into the house unobserved, sneak up to your room, and when Chester goes to bed, chloroform him and get back my money?"

"No; he'll have a watch kept to see that I don't get into the house, you bet; and as for my getting hold of any money, that's out of the question. The sly old coon won't be in the house ten minutes before he'll have the money locked up in the safe. I know; I've tried the racket before."

"Well, then, we shall have to adopt harsher measures," Blake declared, grimly. "To ruin that man, and drive him from my path, is my sole ambition, and do it I will, if I have to spend the remainder of my days in accomplishing it."

"If you've got such a grudge against the gov'nor, why don't you give him a dose of cold lead, and have done with it?" Chump demanded.

At which Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"None of that on my shoulders," he answered. "I've one life to answer for, and that's more than sufficient to satisfy me. I cannot sleep. Night upon night I lay tossing upon my bed in an agony of mental torture, and it is only when I stupefy myself with liquor that I fall into a doze that gives but little rest. Even then I awake from some horrible dream, in which I see myself surrounded by devils, grin-

ning skeletons, and the fires of hell. Ugh! it nearly drives me mad!"

"But come, it benefits us nothing to remain here. Let's away to the rendezvous, where I will map out plans that must be put into immediate execution. The guests will not leave Chester's till past midnight, it is likely, and that will give us time to trap the two sleuths, you see!"

"The two sleuths?"

"Yes."

"I don't understand you. Who do you mean? Humboldt Harry and—"

"Old Avalanche. It appears they have met before, and their both arriving here almost simultaneously convinces me that they are detectives!"

"But why are they here? Who are they looking for?" Chump asked, in unfeigned surprise.

Blake uttered a bitter malediction as he arose to his feet.

"For me, I suppose!" he snarled. "But they'll find they are fishing for the wrong shark, and don't you forget it! There'll be occasion for two graves being dug in this camp before another forty-eight hours expires?"

CHAPTER IX.

NOBLE CARLO.

As a usual thing with Humboldt Harry, no matter how great his surprise at a sudden discovery, he very seldom gave audible expression to it; but the sight of the photograph in the album was so startling that he could not refrain from uttering an exclamation.

The photograph was taken at full length, and was a likeness of a dwarf-sized man of, say thirty years, with a humpback. The head was covered with a bushy shock of hair, and the face was adorned with a stubble of beard.

Yet, withal, the man had not been particularly homely, except for his natural deformities.

"Can I be mistaken?" the young detective mused, as he studied the picture searchingly. "No, it is the same face, as sure as my name is Dick Bristol! I recognize the resemblance, even though the face of the dead man in Satan's Retreat was dried and shriveled up like that of a mummy. This, then, is the picture of Cyrus Clare when he was a younger man! But what is it doing in this album? Can it be I have stumbled upon a clew to the mystery I never expected to solve?"

There was an index in the front part of the album, and he eagerly turned to it to see what name was assigned to picture No. 34.

The name was as he had anticipated—Cyrus Clare!

"That settles that," Harry said. "I am onto a clew, sure enough, and I mean to follow it up. There cannot, or rather could not have been, two Cyrus Clares very readily, who were both deformed alike. And therefore this picture is of the dead man in Satan's Retreat."

He slipped the picture from the album, and put it in his pocket; then watching an opportunity, he put on his hat, and left the house, unseen.

He did not go direct back into the heart of the camp, but, on the contrary, strode away up the gulch, in an opposite direction.

He continued to walk rapidly for half a mile or more, then turned into a mere path, that zig-zagged up the mountain-side. Following this for ten minutes, he came to a shelving ledge, from which a little cave opened into the mountain.

Lying at the mouth of this cave, was the huge black mastiff, referred to in our second chapter; for, no doubt, the reader has already surmised that Humboldt Harry, and Deadwood Dick Junior, were one and the same person.

Carlo sprang up with a joyful bark as he beheld his new master, and frisked about in genuine delight.

"Ah! Carlo, you're glad to see me, eh?" Harry said, patting him affectionately. "Good boy, Carlo! You stayed here, just as I told you to, eh?"

Passing into the cave, the detective soon returned, with a lighted lantern in hand, and sat down on a rock.

"Come here, Carlo," he said, and the dog was by his side, then he drew Cyrus Clare's photograph from his pocket, and holding it in the light, directed the dog's attention to it.

Carlo eyed the picture a moment then smelled of it again and again, wagging his tail, and uttered a low whine.

"Ah! you recognize it, eh?" Harry said, "Who is it, Carlo?"

"Bow! wow!" answered Carlo, at the same time looking off in the direction of Satan's Retreat. "Bow! wow!"

"Just as I thought!" Harry mused. "The

dog's memory is not impaired. I wonder if I were to take him to Hangtown, if he would know Captain Chester? Probably not. According to Cyrus Clare's last letter, Carlo was but a pup, when he came to Satan's Retreat. Hello!"

The latter exclamation was caused by his making the discovery that Carlo had suddenly disappeared.

"Well, that's queer, by George! I wonder where he's gone to?" Dick muttered. "There's something in the wind, or he'd never have left that way. I wonder if I've been followed here?"

He stole to the edge of the ledge, and peered down the mountain-side; but owing to the darkness, he could see only a few feet before him; nor could he hear the slightest noise, there being no wind stirring.

"Strange, I'll be hanged if it ain't. It can't be possible that Carlo has started off for Satan's Retreat, can it? Perhaps he has, and will attempt to drag Cyrus Clare's remains all the way here!"

The thought caused him much uneasiness, and he resolved to wait awhile on the ledge, and see if the dog would not return.

He had not long to wait.

After an absence of fifteen or twenty minutes Carlo reappeared on the ledge, coming from the gulch below.

In his mouth he carried a bundle, wrapped up in buffalo-skin, and tied with strings of the same material.

He appeared to hesitate as he came upon the ledge, and slowly approached Humboldt Harry with his tail between his legs, and looking decidedly sheepish.

"Well, Carlo, what have you got, now?" Harry asked, pleasantly. "Give me the bundle, that's a good fellow!"

Carlo obeyed, and then sat down upon his haunches, wagging his tail and looking inquiringly at his new master, to see if his act was received with favor.

Humboldt Harry saw at once that the bundle had been buried in dirt for some time, for there was mold upon the skin.

Not without keen curiosity he unloosened the strings and unwrapped the bundle.

The contents consisted of a white flannel shirt, with broad collar, a child's calico apron of peculiar figure, and a seal ring bearing the initials "N. C."

That was all, except a scrap of paper, which contained the following in the handwriting of Cyrus Clare:

"This is the bloody shirt Myron Murdock wore when he first came to my hut. This is the apron my little child wore the day before they burnt her up in the hut. This is the ring my wife, Nanon, gave me, a year before she eloped with Murdock. I bury them all forever from the sight of God and man."

"CYRUS CLARE."

"Still another clew," Humboldt Harry said, as he finished the perusal and proceeded to more closely examine the articles. "But, how came the articles here? There is but one way I can see to account for it. Carlo saw Cyrus Clare bury the articles prior to his death. After I left him here, this morning, he went back to Satan's Retreat, dug up the bundle, and brought and hid it in the vicinity of this cave!"

It would seem as if the sagacious animal understood exactly what the detective said, for he wagged his tail and gave vent to a joyful bark.

"Carlo, old boy, you're a trump!" Harry said, patting him fondly, "and there's no money in the world that would buy you from me. You are a detective yourself, and if, together, we can't find Christabel Clare, it will be strange indeed."

The shirt which Murdock had worn was liberally covered with bloodstains, and in the right bosom was a cut such as might have been made by a dagger.

In examining the shirt, Harry chanced to turn up the collar and made another discovery, which, mayhap, had escaped even the eye of the deceased Cyrus Clare.

On the under side of the collar, in scarlet silk, were the initials, "J. B."

The detective surveyed the initials a moment in deep silence, and then a light of comprehension seemed to break over him, for he whistled softly.

"I think I begin to see a glimmer of light ahead!" he muttered. "Yes! yes! I am sure I do. Carlo, old boy, you have given me the key that will unlock the mystery, and when you die, you shall have a marble monument erected at the head of your grave sure's my name's Dick Bristol."

He next examined the apron, which was of an odd figure and pattern, and the ring, which was

solid gold, set with a bloodstone, and the initials inlaid with rose diamonds.

Then he wrapped the three articles carefully up in the skin again, retaining only the paper he had found, placing it in his pocket with the other paper he had found at Satan's Retreat.

He then tossed the bundle upon the ground.

"Take it back, Carlo!" he said.

The dog instantly picked up the bundle, and left the ledge, returning fifteen minutes later without it.

"Good boy, Carlo!" Harry said, petting him.

"Now, you remain here until I return again, when I will bring you some meat. Don't let any one hurt you!"

The dog wagged his tail, and looked wistfully after his young master as he left the ledge, but did not offer to follow.

Humboldt Harry, after leaving the ledge, hurried swiftly back toward Hangtown, for, by striking a match and glancing at his watch, he perceived that it was nearly twelve o'clock, and he presumed his absence would have been already discovered at the party, and considerable anxiety would be felt by the captain at least.

Reaching the Chester residence, he succeeded in gaining entrance without being discovered.

The festivities were still in progress, but he did not get an opportunity to take part in them, for he was immediately pounced upon by both the captain and Old Avalanche.

"Well! well! You're a pretty guest!" the captain cried.

"Great ham-bone, but ye'r a daisy!" added Avalanche.

"Is that so?" Harry replied, laughing.

"That's good news, I'm sure, but, please remember I am not particularly susceptible to flattery."

"We are not flattering you in the least!" the captain assured. "You are guilty of a breach of courtesy by deserting the society of our young ladies, and after you give an explanation of your conduct, we shall sentence you accordingly."

"An' by ther great ham-bone thet discombobberated ther larynx of old Joner, ye won't get off short o' bein' hung!" the Annihilator declared.

"Well, if matters are really so bad as that, I shall be very sorry," Harry replied, with mock gravity. "You see, your Honor, the heat of the rooms here, and the dizzy head I got from dancing, drove me out of doors, to get a sniff of fresh air."

"Well, you must have taken a pretty long sniff," the captain declared. "Accordingly, I shall sentence you to crack a bottle of wine with us."

"All right. I approve of the sentence, and the sooner it is executed the better."

They accordingly adjourned to the captain's library, where they opened a bottle of wine, and toasts were drank over the success of the evening's tournament.

Avalanche then withdrew, on the plea that he "wanted to hev one more game o' snap-an'-ketch-em."

This left Humboldt Harry and the captain alone, which was exactly what the former desired.

A short silence prevailed after the Annihilator's departure, which was finally broken by the captain.

"Well, did you find the fresh air you were hunting for, Humboldt?" he queried, with a peculiar smile.

"Oh! yes, plenty of it!" Harry replied. "I took a little tramp, but I didn't see anything of Jeff Blake or your son, and I came back."

"Didn't see 'em, eh?"

"No."

"Oh! I guess there's no danger of their hanging around here. They are probably away somewhere, concocting some scheme to get square with me, for the loss of the nine thousand dollars has, no doubt, raked open the old wound of enmity in Blake's breast."

"I should presume so! Such a loss as that would make any man of moderate means weak in the knees."

"If he didn't want to lose, he ought not to have bet," was the captain's unconsoling answer.

Well, perhaps not. I suppose both he and Chump will have it in for me, now!"

"Bah! what of it? You keep your weather eye peeled, and I've no fear but what you can outgeneral them. When do you expect to set to work on the case?"

"As soon as I get anything in particular to work on," Harry replied. "I shall cast around to-morrow for some points, and the probability is that I can rake up something as a starter. By

the way, Mr. Chester, how long have you been in the West?"

"A long time—over twenty years."

"You have no wife living?"

"No. She died when May was quite young."

"Had your son and daughter both been with you during your Western residence?"

"No. They attended school in the East, until I came here to Hangtown, after I resigned from the regular army."

"I suppose you are pretty well traveled through the West?"

"I am, indeed! There are very few parts of it that I have not traveled through, west of the Mississippi River."

"So I presumed. In your travels did you ever meet a man named Cyrus Clare?"

Captain Chester started violently, and gazed at the young man in astonishment.

"Cyrus Clare!" he echoed. "Well, I should presume I had! Why do you ask?"

"For the same reason that every one asks questions—out of curiosity, sir. How long since you last saw Cyrus Clare?"

"Over twenty years ago, when we were both young men. The last time I ever saw him he gave me his photograph, which I have in an album in the parlor. I will get it for you!"

"Sit still. I have the picture in my pocket!"

"You have?" and the captain stared, more puzzled than before. "Well! what do you know of Cyrus Clare?"

"More than you do, perhaps, and yet, not so much as I desire to, to unravel a mystery. Did you ever hear from him, after your parting?"

"I heard of him, but not directly from him."

"When did you last hear of him?"

"Two years after we parted."

"Where was he, then?"

"In New Orleans. He was about starting for the Far West, at the time."

"Was he married?"

"He was. He had just married a Southern girl, who, if I remember correctly, was of Spanish descent."

"You never heard of them afterward?"

"Never. I caused inquiries to be made throughout various sections of the West, but could never get any trace of them. It has always been a mystery to me what became of them. But Cyrus was of a roving disposition, and may have gone to Europe!"

"He has gone to a more uncertain realm than Europe, I presume," Harry said, dryly.

"What do you mean?" Chester demanded, excitedly.

"I mean that he has passed in his checks."

"My God! Cyrus is not dead?"

"Yes, I should say he was considerably dead, and has been for several years past. If you will listen, I will explain how I know whereof I speak."

"Go on! go on! For heaven's sake do not delay, nor do not omit a detail!"

Humboldt Harry obeyed, by narrating all about his experience in Satan's Retreat, and how he recognized the picture in the album as that of Cyrus Clare.

He forbore to say anything about his more recent discovery in regard to the clothing, for he wanted to work up the case a little further, before giving too much away.

The captain appeared strangely affected over the news, and when Harry had finished, sat for several minutes with his face buried in his hands.

"This is bad news," he finally said, in a husky voice—"bad news, indeed. I will go to-morrow and have the remains of poor Cyrus and his child brought to Hangtown and properly buried."

"You will do nothing of the sort!" Harry replied.

"Why not, sir? What have you got to say about it?"

"This much!—that where the remains have lain undisturbed for years, I want them there to rest, until I arrest Myron Murdock and Clare's faithless wife, take them to Satan's Retreat, and confront them with the evidence of their crime!"

"Ah! but you may never find them!"

"Never fear! Let me alone, and I'll show you! It is my candid belief I could nab 'em now, if all things were ready."

"Then, by heaven, if that be true, you shall have your own way. I will, however, visit the place to-morrow and view the remains. From what you say, I judge you expect to find the guilty pair in this camp?"

"Possibly."

"Do I know them? I must, surely, if they are residents."

"I cannot answer that question at present."

Leave all to me, and if I don't work it out, and find Clare's daughter in the bargain, nobody can."

"Very well. I will leave all to you, and if you succeed in capturing the guilty pair, for once I will forego my usual objections to lynch law, and say, 'String 'em up, and let no mercy be shown!'"

"From the feeling you seem to manifest over what I have told you, I should infer that you and Cyrus Clare were warm personal friends."

"So we were, for, my friend, I might as well admit to you, in confidence, that instead of being Chester, my true name is Clare!"

"Indeed! Then you and Cyrus—"

"Were own brothers!"

"You surprise me, sir. I should not have suspected that."

"Perhaps not, for we never strongly resembled each other, you understand. Nevertheless, it is a fact that we were brothers. And, knowing that my brother's spirit calls for vengeance, I will see that vengeance is obtained. If you succeed in capturing the guilty pair, it will be a fortune in your pocket, young man!"

"Regardless of pay, I shall seek to put matters to rights," Harry assured, "and I am certain of my ability to do so."

"Then, do not delay. By the way, where is the dog?"

"I have him not far from town. When I want to use him, I will produce him. He is a detective of no mean order, himself, and but for his sagacity, I should never have suspected that either Murdock or Cyrus Clare's faithless wife were in this camp."

"Indeed! Well, I'll leave all to you, for I have the greatest confidence in you, the same as I had from the moment I first saw you."

They returned to the scene of the festivities, where Harry was pleased to see May and Maurice waltzing together.

The captain saw them, too, but save a slight knitting of the brows, he gave no expression of his disapproval.

The party broke up about two o'clock, but Humboldt Harry took his departure half an hour earlier, after bidding all hands good-night.

The way to the Demijohn Hotel, from Captain Chester's residence, was quite dark and lonely, but the young detective was too busied with other thoughts, to think of danger.

Better would it have been for him had he kept a watch out, as Chester had warned him, for he had not proceeded a hundred yards from the Captain's residence, when he was struck a blow on the back of the head, that felled him to the ground, bereft of his senses.

CHAPTER X.

IN DURANCE.

WHEN Jeff Blake and Chump Chester left the stand, where they had consulted together, they passed out into the street, near the Demijohn; then entered a sort of lane, (for it was really no street) that led toward the section of the camp where the houses were few and far between.

At a rude shanty, on the very outskirts of the camp, they paused, and Blake gave three sharp but deliberate raps.

After a pause, he repeated them, whereupon the door swung open, and they were admitted.

The interior of the shanty was as rough as the outside, and supplied with only a few pieces of rude furniture, including a cook-stove and cot-bed.

A tallow candle on the table gave forth a dim light.

The person who had admitted the two conspirators, was a scrawny old hag, with a hawk-like face, little peering eyes, and straggling gray hair—looking ugly enough to be a witch.

This was Mother Google, and this same Mother Google had established herself as one of Hangtown's noted characters.

She had come to the place when it was in its infancy, built her own shanty, and made the declaration that if there was any laundry business to be done in the town she was going to do it.

By-and-by, an almond-eyed Chinaman dropped into Hangtown, with the intention of starting an opposition shop, but he was immediately waited upon by Mrs. Google and a six-shooter, and informed that he must "git!"

John declared that he would do nothing of the sort, and, as a result, the male residents of the camp were put to the trouble of covering him up with dirt the same afternoon.

Four other enterprising sons of Confucius were served with doses of death by the belligerent Mrs. Google, and then, as no others of the

Celestial race ventured near Hangtown, Mrs. Google had matters all her own way.

As soon as Blake and Chump Chester entered the shanty she quickly closed and barred the door.

"Well, Google, how goes it?" Blake asked, as he filled and lit his pipe.

"Oh, slowly—slowly," was the reply, in a squeaky voice. "It's always slow and a life o' drudgery wi' poor me."

"Poor fiddlesticks! Why, you old hen, I'll bet you've got thousands of dollars hid away among them rags o' yours."

"No, no!" was the quick reply. "Business is very bad, and I am very poor!"

"All right! Have it your own way if it suits you best. Are the boys below?"

"Yes."

"Then come on," Blake said to young Chester.

"We will go down."

A portion of the floor of the shanty was covered with a piece of old rag carpet. Kicking this aside, Blake exposed to view a trap-door.

Lifting it, a ladder was revealed, and this the two men descended, into a cellar, Mother Google closing the trap after them, and leaving them in total darkness.

"Stand still," Blake cautioned, when they reached the bottom of the ladder. "I'll have a light in a jiffy."

He groped around in the darkness for awhile, and then found and lit a lantern, whose bright glow illuminated every part of the cellar, which was a small, dug-out affair, the sides being planked up to prevent the ground from caving in.

At one end of the cellar was a large, black hole, which appeared to lead slantwise downward into the bowels of the earth.

This aperture was large enough to admit the passage of a man standing erect.

Motioning Chump to follow him, Blake led the way into the drift, and they proceeded to follow its winding and descending course for five or six minutes, when they came to a large vault. The bottom and the sides were of comparatively smooth rock, while the ceiling was of planks, supported by stringers, which were in turn held in place by strong stanchions.

In the center of the ceiling was a dark hole, about the circumference of a hog'shead, which appeared to extend toward the surface.

Down through this aperture hung a rope ladder, reaching to within a couple of feet of the vault floor.

Opening from this vault was a second compartment, which was guarded by a heavy door, to which were attached both locks and bolts.

As for the vault itself, it was quite a cosy place, and a curious one for that far-away region.

There were tables, benches, stools, etc., strewn about, the two former pieces of furniture being covered with tools of various designs, dies, metals and the other adjuncts that go to make up a counterfeiter's outfit.

There was also a sort of smelting furnace, on a small scale, and a press.

In fact a more complete plant for the manufacture of bogus money would be hard to find.

Some half a dozen rough-looking fellows were lounging about the place, when Blake and Chump arrived, all of them wearing full beards, and fully armed.

They were not working; instead, each one seemed vying with the other to see who could do the best toward filling the place with tobacco smoke.

A scowl of displeasure came over the face of Jeff Blake, when he saw this.

"Hello! What the devil does this mean?" he demanded, savagely. "Why ain't you all at work?"

"We don't work holidays," was the reply of one man. "Besides that, we've finished up the last job, an' the boss hain't showed up with the rhino."

"What difference does that make? Haven't you always got your pay promptly? Where's the rest of the boys?"

"Round town, somewheres, most likely, lay-in' in a jag of nose paint."

"And Crimson Claw?"

"Dunno. Haven't seen her, to-night."

"Well, I'll be cussed if this isn't a pretty state of affairs!" growled Blake. "I dare say you fellows were out to see the tournament, too?"

"We were, you bet! The old woman said she'd keep an eye on things, and so we concluded we might just as well take in the circus as not."

"Well, we'll have some different arrangements made, after this!" Blake declared, decid-

edly. "Let it pass this time, however. I've work for you fellows, and there's money in it."

"Good money is what we want," the spokesman of the counterfeiters declared. "That's what we live for. What is it you want done?"

"Oh! simply an easy job, which the six of you can arrange quite easily. You saw the young cuss who came out first winner in the tournament?"

"We saw him."

"Well, I want that fellow captured, and brought here!"

"What for?"

"Because I suspect he is here to spy on us, and was brought here by Captain Chester. He's a detective."

"What do you propose to do with him, after he is captured?"

"Lock him up in the dungeon, and keep him until I make up my mind just how to dispose of him."

"Why not do him up at once?"

"No! no! I may want to use him. You are to capture him and bring him here, without serious injury, if possible."

"Oh, we are the boys as can do that. Whar is the cuss now?"

"Attending the party at Chester's house. You are to lay for him when he starts back for the hotel. If you go now you will have plenty of time to hunt up the other boys and warn them to keep away from here for a few days, till I size up how the land lays. It won't pay to run any risks, and after you bring the fellow here you and the other boys can have a holiday of several days, until I am satisfied it is safe for you to resume operations here."

This appeared to please the gang, and they at once made preparations for departure.

When they had left the vault Jeff Blake chuckled softly.

"When I once get Humboldt Harry in my power it will be an easy matter to capture old Avalanche. With them out of my way, I have no fear but what I can get the best of your father," he said, addressing Chump. "Once I get his money away from him, he will fall flat, and then I will spring some trap on him that will drive him from the country. That is, if you are sure that all the money he has he keeps in his safe."

"Yes, I'm sure of that. I've heard him frequently express his distrust of banking institutions, and I do not know of any real estate he owns, except his house, nor of any speculations he is concerned in. So what money he has must be locked up in the safe."

"So it would seem. When we are all ready, however, it won't take us long to blow open that safe. If he has anywhere as much money as I think it will be a fat haul. How much did you say you rate him at?"

"A good half a million at least; anyhow I know he had two whopping fortunes left to him, within a year's time, that must have aggregated nearly a million."

Jeff Blake's eyes sparkled villainously in anticipation of getting hold of so much money.

They waited in the vault, impatiently, for the return of the Hawks, and the moments seemed to drag by on leaden wings.

At last, however, footsteps were heard coming down the drift, and a few seconds later the six outlaws entered the vault, carrying between them the body of Humboldt Harry, who was literally covered with blood from a wound on his head.

"We got ther cuss, boss," one of the Hawks declared, as the detective was deposited on the floor. "We didn't have no trouble at all, 'cept havin' to wait fer him. Jest hit him a tap on ther head, an' he drapped as nice as yo please."

"You've killed him, perhaps," Blake said, angrily.

"Bah! nothing of the sort. He'll be all right directly."

"Did you notify the other boys to go to the mountain rendezvous?"

"Yes, an' they've gone, an' we're goin', too."

"Go ahead. I will send for you when you're wanted."

"But what aire we gittin for this job?"

"I haven't got any money with me, but ye can go to Buck Brannigan an' git what whisky you want on my account."

This seemed to satisfy the men, for they immediately took their departure.

"That's the way to pay off your help, and at the same time hang on to your money," Blake chuckled. "Get some water yonder, Chester, and we'll wipe off some of the blood on the poor cuss, and then let him take his own time to come to his senses. I guess he is not so badly hurt as I first thought for."

With water and an old handkerchief, Blake proceeded to wipe the coagulating blood from Humboldt Harry's face, hands and garments.

He then procured some straps and bound the prisoner's feet and hands, after which the door of the cell was unlocked, Harry was dragged into it, and left lying on the hard floor.

The door was then carefully relocked.

"There! I reckon he will keep all right," Blake announced. "I'll let him meditate on the evil of his ways, until I find time to pay him another visit. Come, we will be going."

"Are you not going to take the lantern?"

"No, leave that here for light. We can find our way out. Here, take my hand."

They then disappeared by the way they had come, and Humboldt Harry was left a prisoner in the lonely underground dungeon, with no prospect of immediate release; if indeed, he ever escaped.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTABEL CLARE.

WHEN Humboldt Harry recovered his senses, it was with the realization that he had a fearful headache.

At first he could not comprehend his situation, but gradually, as his mind became clearer, he remembered being struck upon the head, after which all became blank.

With an effort, he gained a sitting position, and gazed inquiringly around, while he passed his hand slowly over his head until he came to the gaping cut, which had ceased to bleed.

"I wonder where I am?" he muttered, peering through the air grating of the dungeon door, into the main vault. "One thing is certain—I'm a prisoner, fast enough, and whoever struck me over the head did so with a vengeance."

He crept nearer to the door, and was able to command a view of the whole of the main vault.

"As I live, I'm in a counterfeit den!" he exclaimed, "for yonder is the whole outfit for the manufacture of bogus money. But, where are the workers of the concern? There don't appear to be any one to home."

He surveyed the interior of the main vault for a while, and then turned his attention to his bonds.

His hands had not been confined behind his back, in the customary way, but were bound together in front of him.

Noting which, Harry smiled.

"It is evident my captors are not used to handling prisoners," he muttered, "or they wouldn't have bound me in this fashion."

Nature had endowed him with a splendid set of teeth, and he at once proceeded to pick out the knots that held his wrists together.

It was not a hard job.

In less than five minutes Harry had his hands free, and then it was but a matter of a few seconds to cut away the bonds that bound his ankles.

"So far, all is good," he said, as he rose to his feet, "but the next thing is to get out of this coop, and that don't look quite so easy. I wonder if my captors took the pains to search me?"

He examined his pockets, and, to his joy, discovered that nothing had been touched. His money, the papers written by Clare, and his revolvers even were just as they had been before the assault.

"That's one lucky thing, anyhow," he soliloquized. "It's rather strange, too, that my pockets were not rifled, if, as I have no doubt, I owe my capture to Jeff Blake. Perhaps he's out fishing after some other game, and intends to return and do me up as soon as he gets it. In that case, it behooves me to get out of here, if I can, as soon as possible."

He tried the door, but found it securely fastened, and soon saw that there was no way for him to force it open, as it was firmly hung and fastened.

Three sides of the cell were of solid rock; the fourth, which was the front, was of heavy masonry; so Harry well understood that there was no possibility of his effecting his escape without outside aid, and he was reflecting as to what was best to be done, when he made a discovery.

The rope ladder which hung downward from the hole in the ceiling of the outer vault.

It is not probable that he would have observed this rope but for the fact that it was swaying to and fro in an agitated manner.

"Hello! here's a go!" he muttered. "Funny I didn't see that contrivance before. That must be the means of entrance to this underground

den, and, judging by appearances, some one is coming down the string."

He drew and cocked one of his revolvers, resolved, if worst came to worst, to sell his life dearly.

With expectant gaze he watched the swaying of the rope.

Presently a decided feminine pair of feet came into view, followed by a woman's dress, and in a couple of seconds more, a young woman stood upon the floor of the vault—or a maiden, rather, for she did not appear to be more than sixteen or seventeen years of age.

A gloriously pretty creature she was, with a perfectly-molded, wax-like face, of sweet expression, dark, brilliant eyes, and hair of the same color, that fell in careless profusion over her shoulders.

She was attired in a flowing robe of white, which trailed behind her.

Harry could barely repress an exclamation as he saw her, so beautiful she was.

She paused for a moment at the foot of the rope, and gazed searchingly around the main vault. Then taking the lantern from the table, she advanced toward the door of the cell.

As she flashed the light into the cell and saw Harry standing just inside the gratings, she started back with a little cry.

"Don't be alarmed, miss," Harry said, cheerily. "I'm locked in here, and couldn't eat you up even if I were a cannibal."

"But, sir, I thought you were bound?" the girl said, coming closer to the door.

"So I was, but I gave the bonds the go-by, you see."

"Are you Humboldt Harry?"

"I am—or at least I was, before I awoke to consciousness and found myself in here. Now, perhaps, my name might be more appropriately called Dennis. By the way, who are you?"

"I am three persons in one. I am Crimson Claw, chief of the Hen-Hawks; I am Mildred Blake, and I am not either!"

"Well, that's funny!" Harry said, gazing at her intently. "I'll bet I can tell you the name you bore when you were a child."

The maiden started, and gazed at him incredulously.

"You can?" she said, eagerly. "How can you? What do you know of me when I was a child?"

"Not much, and yet again, considerable. Did you not use to bear the name of Christabel?"

"Yes, yes! Oh! you must know something about me, sir! Please tell me—oh, please do! But wait first, till I let you out; then you must tell me all."

She produced a bunch of keys and proceeded to unlock the door, an operation that occupied several minutes, but finally the clumsy portal swung open, and Humboldt Harry was free to step out into the main vault.

"Now you must tell me what you know about me," Christabel said, leading the way forward to a seat. "I am very anxious to hear."

"Well, before I can tell you much," Harry responded. "I shall have to ask you some questions, which I trust you will answer."

"I will do so, so far as lies in my power, sir."

"Very well. Are you aware that your name is not Blake?"

"I have always suspected so, since I grew up."

"Have you any idea what your real name is?"

"No, sir, more than that when I was some seven years old I was called Christabel. Then, one day, mamma told me my name was not Christabel, but was Mildred Blake."

"Do you not remember back further than seven years?"

"No; I think not."

"Where were you then?"

"In Denver, Colorado."

"How long did you live in Denver?"

"Until two years ago—that is, mamma and I did."

"Then Jeff Blake was not with you?"

"Only once in three or four months."

"Have you no recollection of, when a little child, living in a deep valley, surrounded by high mountains, your home being a hut?"

"I have had a dream, frequently, of such a place, sir. Not long ago I dreamt of it, and I thought I was a little girl. Strange, wasn't it? And in my dream I saw another wee bit of a girl, toddling around, and a little hump-backed old man. Oh! it was an awful funny dream!"

"When you left Denver, where did you go to?"

"We came here to Hangtown."

"How has your mother always treated you?"

"Very badly, sir, but I never was used quite so badly until we came here. Since then, both mother and Jeff Blake have treated me shamefully. They have frequently beat me, and threatened to murder me, and to save my life, I was forced to become the leader of the band of counterfeiters, known as the Hen-Hawks. Oh! sir, I am so tired and weary of this terrible life, that I pray nightly, when I go to my bed, I may never awaken again in this life."

"No wonder, dear lady. I doubt not yours has been a hard lot, for I am aware that your mother and Jeff Blake, are no less than two human fiends. If you will listen, I will tell you all I know about them."

Harry then related all that he knew of the Clare case, beginning with his discovery of the remains in Satan's Retreat, and the recovery of the dying statement of Cyrus Clare. This paper he read aloud to Christabel.

He then went on to tell how he had come to Hangtown; how Carlo had brought him the bundle; how he had discovered Clare's picture in Captain Chester's album, and how he had learned that Chester and Cyrus Clare were brothers.

Christabel listened, with rapt attention, and eagerness.

"This is all very strange," she said, when the detective had finished. "If I am really Cyrus Clare's own daughter, then, I must be the cousin of May and Charley Clare?"

"Exactly."

"But what reason have you to suppose that the Myron Murdock, with whom Mrs. Clare eloped, is Jeff Blake?"

"Well, in the first place, in the papers left behind, by Cyrus Clare, he designates his lost child as Cherry, and his living one as Christabel. The latter, you say, was your early name. In the second place, on the under side of the collar of the shirt Murdock wore when he first came to, are the initials, 'J. B.' worked in silk. Now, 'J. B.' stands for Jeff Blake, don't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, in the third place, Clare's wife's first name was Nanon. What is your mother's name?"

"It is also Nanon."

"Ah! Doesn't that then go to prove, conclusively, that you are just whom I have stated?"

"Yes, sir. I have no longer any doubt of it. Oh! sir, I am very grateful to you for what you have told me."

"And I am glad to have been so successful, in clearing up the mystery. Now that you know who you are, Miss Clare, will you remain with your mother?"

"Remain with her, murderess that she is? No! never! She is no mother of mine! I have no money, but I can perhaps get something to do, to support myself!"

"There will be no cause for you to labor, for a livelihood, Miss Clare," Harry replied—"not the least cause in the world, for there is gold enough belonging to you, in Satan's Retreat, to keep you, comfortably, for many a year. Now, if you will accept of my advice, I will fix up matters, all right for you."

"Most assuredly I will accept your advice, for you have indeed proven yourself a friend to me," Christabel said, earnestly.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do then. You help me to get out of this place, and I will take you to Captain Chester's, explain all to him and give you into his charge, and I'll guarantee you will be gladly received. By the way, does Maurice know anything about this counterfeiting business?"

"No; it has been kept a secret from him, for he is honorable and upright, and would have given the whole thing away."

"Exactly. Well, what do you say to going to the captain's house?"

"I am willing to do whatever you say, sir."

"Very good. How shall we get out of this place?"

"By the way I came down. That rope leads direct to the kitchen of the Blake house."

"Will there be no danger of our being discovered?"

"No; the household are asleep up-stairs. You can wait out-of-doors, while I dress. It will not take me long. You may go up the ladder first; I will follow."

Humboldt Harry obeyed, and in a few minutes more found himself outside the Blake residence, a free man.

Christabel rejoined him shortly, fully dressed, and taking a circuitous route so as to avoid dis-

covery, they hurried off and soon reached the Chester dwelling.

The house was dark and silent, and the inmates evidently were abed and asleep.

There was a door bell at command, however, and Harry quickly set this to jingling. As a result, an upper window was raised, and the captain's partially bald head protruded.

"Who's there?" was the gruff inquiry.

"Humboldt Harry," was the reply, "and I want to come in at once."

"Wait!" the colonel said, and down went the window.

In less than a half minute both the captain and May appeared at the door, and Harry and Christabel were ushered into the parlor.

"Well well!" the colonel said, "you young people are making calls rather early in the morning, ain't you, or is that a new fashion that has sprung into vogue? Why! thunder and Mars! Harry, my boy, you are all daubed over with blood! What in the world has been the snort?"

Harry laughed quietly, and then, in a few words, explained the experience he had recently passed through, and his discovery of the counterfeiter's den.

"And then there's really no secret mine, but instead a bogus money mill, eh?" the captain ejaculated in astonishment.

"Just so, and Jeff Blake is the chief-cook-and-bottle-washer."

"How comes it that Miss Mildred accompanies you?"

"To her I owe my rescue," Harry replied.

"It gives me great pleasure, captain, to present to your notice, *not* Miss Mildred Blake, but your long lost niece, Miss Christabel Clare!"

"What! Do I hear aright? This young lady my brother's child? I'll not believe it!"

"Nevertheless, it is true, sir."

"Then, Jeff Blake is Myron Murdock, and the woman who lives with him is she who was my brother's wife, say you?"

"Exactly. If you will listen, I will explain."

Both the captain and May embraced Christabel, while Humboldt Harry made his explanation, and when he had done, Christie was kissed and hugged until she must have felt a thousand times sure that she was heartily welcomed.

"Well, by Mars!" the captain cried, in an excess of joy. "This is the best news I've heard in a dog's age, shoot me if it isn't! And, now, you young Mercury"—slapping Harry on the shoulder—"just you plump yourself right down in a chair, and begin to figure up your bill of damages against me. There's plenty of paper on the table, and if there isn't enough to hold your account, I'll hunt up some more!"

"I can tell you what my bill is," Harry smiled.

"It amounts to the total sum of—nothing, and you needn't be in a hurry about paying me, at that. But I've no more time to spare, now. I *must* be moving, for I've got work to do, yet, before daybreak."

"I have brought Miss Clare to you, knowing she would be safe in your custody. To-morrow, I have plans laid for the arrest of Blake and Nanon Clare. The counterfeiter's can be nabbed later on."

"Here is what I want you to do. By ten o'clock to-morrow, I want a party consisting of yourself, Miss May, Miss Christabel, Old Avalanche, Ray Rodney and Maurice Blake, to be in Satan's Retreat. Your departure from here must be unobserved, and when you arrive in the pocket, immediately conceal yourself behind a row of bowlders which you will find on the north side, and remain there. Pretty soon I will, in disguise, arrive in company with Blake and Mrs. Clare, and lead them toward you. When we are quite close, you are to spring from covert, and cover us with your rifles. The rest will then all be easy. Can you attend to getting the party quietly together, and be there on time?"

"I can, most certainly!" the captain assented.

"Very well. I will depend on you, and we will sum up the little case much sooner than you ever expected, I guess!"

"Bristol, my boy, you are a trump, and you shall never be without a staunch friend while I live!" the captain declared, with emotion.

After a few more instructions and admonitions, the young detective took his departure; but, first, however, he allowed Christabel to clip away some of his hair, and carefully dress the ugly cut in his scalp.

He then set out to make preparations for the "wind-up," which he proposed to have take place the following forenoon.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEAT TRICK.

As a usual thing the Blakes were not early

risers, and it was eight o'clock the next morning when they sat down to the breakfast-table, in their cosy kitchen.

Blake himself appeared in a better humor than usual, but not so with his wife, for her face wore a dissatisfied, troubled expression.

She was a large-framed woman, with a thin, sharp face, dark complexion, and jetty eyes and hair, and her face looked so cold and hard of expression as to dispel the idea that it was often visited by a smile.

"Isn't Mildred up yet?" Blake inquired, as he sipped his coffee.

"No, she's not up, and I'm not going to take the trouble to call her, either. She knows when it's time to get up, and if she is too lazy, let her go without her breakfast!" was the snappish reply.

"Well, you needn't bite one's head off when you speak, Nanon," Blake replied, tranquilly.

"What in thunder's the matter with you this morning, woman?"

"You know what's the matter!" was the answer. "I want to go East, where one can see some life and enjoyment. But you, you old fool, will hang around here until you get us both in trouble."

"Why, Nanon! I'm astonished at your desire for better quarters. Hangtown is good enough for me."

"Oh, shut up! Don't talk to me about what is good enough for you, you old sinner. I'm getting about sick of you, anyhow, and if you don't make a start for the East in about a week, I shall!"

"Go it, Melinda, go it!" the old villain replied, with a chuckle. "I'm willin', an' so is Barkis! I'll stay here and salt away the 'sugar'!"

"Oh, will you?" the woman sneered. "You're mighty willing I should go, ain't you? Well, then, allow me to inform you that I *won't* go, just to spite you! But, mind you, if your stubbornness in staying here gets us into any trouble, I'll not be the one to suffer."

"I reckon you'll stand your share of it!" Blake retorted, grimly.

"No, I wouldn't."

"And why wouldn't you?"

"Because I'd sell out, this way!" Nanon hissed, and drawing a dagger from the folds of her dress, she placed the point of it toward her heart.

Blake laughed hoarsely.

"Oh, you are quite heroic now!" he said, "but I opine when it comes to the stickin' point, you'd weaken. But there's no fear of our getting into trouble at all. I've got that fellow, Humboldt Harry, in limbo, and will have his comrade, Old Avalanche, before night. So cheer up! I've made arrangements to loot old Chester's safe, and as soon as I get hold of all his boodle, we will both make a quiet exit to some distant part of the country."

This announcement seemed to somewhat mollify Nanon, for she sat down to the table to eat.

The morning repast was about finished when there came a knock at the kitchen door.

"Come in!" Blake called out, presuming some of his neighbors had called.

In answer to this invitation, the door swung open, and a stranger stepped upon the threshold.

And such a stranger he was, too!

It was plainly to be seen by his red hair and the cast of his countenance, as well as the peculiarity of his dress, that he was a son of the Emerald Isle, and apparently, was not long over from "the ould sod."

Upon his back he carried a large pack, such as wandering peddlers are wont to tote around.

"Arrah! an' it's good-mornin' to yez!" saluted the stranger, with an obsequious bow. "Shure an' it's a foine mornin', so it is!"

"Well, what of it?" Blake growled. "Who are you, an' what d'ye want?"

"Who is it, I am, an' phat do I want? Shure, I'm a dacent man, I am, an' McCarthy, me name—Robert Emmet McCarthy, at yerservice. An' I have a foine stock of goods to be sellin' the good lady, so I have, such as calicoes, muslins, thread, needles, pins, buttons, laces, an' suspindlers. Thin' I have lots av little things phat come handy in ivery family, bedad!"

"Git out. We don't want nothin', you tramp!" Blake said, gruffly. "Be gone with ye!"

"Tramp, is it?" replied McCarthy, depositing his bundle on the floor. "Faith, an' I'm no tramp, at all. By the powers, it's a dacent mon I am, an' tryin' to make an honest livin'. Would yez not be kind enough to help a poor mon along, yer Honor?"

"No! I tell you!" Blake thundered. "Get out of my house, or I'll get up and kick you out."

"You'll be afther kickin' me out, will ye? Thin, begorra, I'll not be givin' yez the chance. I kin walk out ivery cint as chape, an' not put yez to the trouble. But, before I go, would yez be kind enough to tell a poor ignorant paddy, phat's jest over the wather, a question, yer Honor?"

"Well, what do you want to know, you vagabond?"

"Shure, it's a simple question, sor, kin yez tell goold whin you see it?"

"Can I tell gold when I see it? Well, I should sneeze up a snake, my verdant Corkonian!" Blake declared, with a laugh.

"You should sneeze up a snake, is it? Howly saints! Phat would St. Patrick say if he was to hear the loikes av that?"

"Come! no more of your blarney. Why do you wish to know if I can tell gold?"

"Because, yer Honor, it's divil a bit I kin tell it mesilf, unless it's money. I found a lump av stuff, the other day, an' said I to mesilf—"Bedad, McCarthy, if that be goold, you're a made man, an' yez can go back to Dublin, an' marry swate Kitty McCann. So, yer Honor, I thought I'd be afther axin' yez phat you thought about it."

"Indeed! Let's see your 'stuff,' as you call it. I can mighty quick tell you whether it is gold, or not!" Blake said, eagerly.

McCarthy fished around in his pocket for awhile, and finally produced a golden nugget, nearly the size of a robin's egg.

It was a beauty, too, being the pure stuff.

"Faith, there it is, an' divil a wan do I know whither it be goold or brass," the Irishman said, as he tossed it to Blake.

"Where did you get this?" Blake quickly demanded, with great eagerness.

"Where did I get it? Shure, et was about a dozen miles from here, yer Honor, 'way down in the divil's own hole in the mountains, where there be skeletons layin' around, an' one would think the divil himsilf resided."

Blake and Nanon exchanged startled glances.

"You say you found this there?"

"Faith an' I did."

"Whereabouts?"

"Oh! I happened to stumble onto a place where it was hid, intirely by accident. Yez could s'arch for the place till yer shinbones got so thin they'd cut b'afestake, begorra, and ye'd never find it."

"Indeed! What will you take for this lump?"

"What is it I'll take for it? Now, thin, phat'll ye give?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a hundred dollars for it, providing you will take us to the spot where you found it."

"A hundred dollars?"

"That's what I said."

"And who is *us*?"

"Myself and wife."

"An' ye'd be afther givin' me a hundred dollars?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Well, by the smbke av St. Pat. Phat d'yez take me for, annyhow? Do yez think because I'm from the ould sod that I'm a fool? Phy, by the powers, mon, there be a bushel o' thim same where I found that!"

"Then, conduct us at once to the spot, and I'll give you a thousand dollars!"

"A thousand dollars, did yez say?"

"Exactly, a thousand!"

"May the divil niver ate turkey if I do it. If thim nuggins is worth a thousin' to you, shure they are worth ivery cint as much to me. You kin kape that one to remember me by—Robert Emmet McCarthy, Esquire. Good-mornin' to yez! I'll go git tha goold an' start the foineest saloon in the counthry, begorra!"

"Hold on!" Blake cried, springing up. "Will you swear that what you say about this gold is true?"

"Bad luck to yez, av course I will! Faith an' I've never told a lie, since Biddy Maloney broke me jaw wid a mate-ax!"

"Then I'll make you a big offer. Take us where this gold is concealed, and I'll give you five thousand dollars, all in clean, new green-backs!"

"Five thousand dollars?" soliloquized McCarthy, scratching his head, meditatively. "Shure that's a pile, it is, but not enough. Tell yez what I'll do. Give me tin, an' begorra I'll show you where the goold is. Thin I'll cross the big puddle, build a fence around ould Ireland, an' have home rule all by myself."

Blake looked at Nanon significantly.

"Put on your things," he said. "I will take

the Paddy's offer, and we will go and see what there is about this matter."

Nanon immediately arose and left the room; then Blake turned to the peddler.

"It's all right," he said. "I will take you at your offer, and we will start at once. When you show us the gold I will pay you the sum you have named."

"Whin I show ye the place?"

"That's what I said."

"But ye won't!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's divil a step I'll take toward showin' yez the gold, until I get the money."

"Oh! all right. I'll pay you beforehand then. It makes no material difference to me."

He left the room, but soon returned with a package of bank notes, which, of course, were counterfeit.

Sitting down at the table, he counted out ten thousand dollars in notes, all in hundred-dollar bills, and handed them to McCarthy, who counted them over several times, and then stowed them away in an inside pocket.

"Faith, an' it's but a short time I'll stay in this divil's own country now," he declared. "I'll skip back to Cork an' live like a prince, so I will."

Nanon soon reappeared, ready for the journey, and locking the house, the party took their departure, mounted upon three of Blake's horses, McCarthy leaving his bundle behind him.

In due time the entrance of the dark ravine leading to Satan's Retreat was reached, and the party dismounted.

Procuring resinous pine, McCarthy converted it into a torch and led the way down the narrow defile into the mountain pocket.

In due time the opening was reached, and the guide led the way toward the row of boulders on the north side.

Unsuspecting the surprise in store for them, Blake and Nanon followed with manifest eagerness.

CHAPTER XIII. CONCLUSION.

"SHURE, et's almost a notion I have to back out an' not show yez where the goold is at all!" said McCarthy, as they neared the range of boulders. "Wou'd yez take back the tin thousand, sor?"

"No, I'll not take back the ten thousand," replied Blake, gruffly, "and if you don't show us where the gold is, I'll blow your devilish brains out!"

"Will yez, now? Thin, be jabers, ye kin have the goold an' go to the divil wid it."

"HALT!"

Stern and authoritative came the challenge, and simultaneously there arose into view, from behind the range of rocks, four men, each of whom leveled a cocked rifle toward the approaching trio.

They were, of course, Captain Chester, Old Avalanche, Maurice Blake, and Ray Rodney.

"Throw up your hands!" the captain ordered, "or we'll riddle you!"

"Yes, throw up your dukes!" cried Humboldt Harry, quickly throwing off his McCarthy disguise, and drawing a revolver. "The game is up, my pretty pair of birds, and you must surrender, or take the consequences!"

Mrs. Clare screamed, and Blake swore furiously, but both threw up their hands according to orders.

Harry then produced some stout cord, and bound their hands behind their backs.

"There you are!" he said, in triumph, "as pretty a pair of human buzzards as ever existed. And, seeing as how you're all comfortable, please give your thanks to Mr. Robert Emmet McCarthy, from ould Oirland!"

By this time, the captain's party, including May and Christabel, had gathered in front of the prisoners.

"Curses seize you all!" cried Blake, furious with rage. "I demand to know what is the meaning of this outrage!"

"It means," replied Captain Clare, as we shall hereafter call him, "that you, sir, have reached the end of your tether, and after to-day, there will be one less villain in the world. Jeff Blake, do you know who I am?"

"Yes, and have known, for years. Cursed fool that I was that I did not murder you, long ago!"

"Who am I?"

"Clement Clare of course!"

"And you are Myron Murdock!"

Blake started; then his face became dogged and defiant of expression.

"Well!" he growled, "what of it?"

"That woman by your side, is Nanon, the faithless wife of my brother, Cyrus, and the inhuman fiend who left her younger child to perish in the flames!"

Nanon grew deathly pale, and leaned against Blake for support.

"This girl," continued the captain, "is Christabel Clare my brother's daughter"—pointing to Christie—"and is henceforth my daughter. Detective!"

"Yes, sir!" responded Harry.

"Give me the articles in the bundle."

"Yes, sir," and Harry first produced the shirt.

"Jefferson Blake, alias Myron Murdock, do you recognize this?" the captain demanded, holding up the bloodstained garment.

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps!" he said, stolidly.

"Of course you do. You wore that shirt when you first came to the humble home you afterward broke up. Nanon Clare, do you recognize these articles—a ring you once gave your dead husband, and an apron your youngest child wore, the day before it was consumed in the flames?"

Nanon made no reply, but with a shudder, averted her face.

"I see the seal of guilt on your accusing faces! you both tremble in fear. And well you may. You are two inhuman, detestable wretches, whose further existence is a stain on the earth. You must die. I have sworn to avenge the wrongs of my brother and his child, yet I propose to give you a choice. Die you shall, and you need not ask for mercy. Now, which do you prefer—to die by my hand, or to be taken to Hangtown, and be strung up, in the presence of the populace?"

"You'd better finish the job here!" retorted Blake, now the personation of a baffled fiend.

"What do you say, Nanon Clare?" the captain sternly demanded.

The guilty woman's only reply was a convulsive shudder.

The captain turned to Humboldt Harry.

"Detective!"

"Yes, sir!"

"March them forward to the ruins of the hut. They must view the scene of their monstrous crime before they die!"

Harry and Avalanche, covering the guilty pair with their revolvers, ordered them to move forward toward the hut.

The captain and the rest of his party, except the girls, brought up the rear.

Neither May or Christabel could be induced to go along.

At last the party reached the spot where rested all that was earthly of poor Cyrus Clare and his infant child.

For a moment Blake and Nanon gazed upon the ghastly sight, both pale as death. Then Nanon uttered a piercing shriek, tottered back and fell prone upon the ground.

The men gathered around her and raised her, but it was seen that she had not fainted—she was stone dead!

Taking advantage of the confusion, Jeff Blake turned quickly and fled swiftly toward the tunnel.

Humboldt Harry and Avalanche discovered his flight at the same instant, and the Annihilator quickly brought his rifle to his shoulder.

"Don't shoot!" Harry cried. "See! vengeance will overtake him."

He pointed across the gulch.

There all eyes beheld a huge dog bounding away in pursuit.

It was Carlo!

In less time than it takes to tell it, Blake had disappeared from view in the tunnel.

A few seconds later Carlo also disappeared.

After burying the remains of Cyrus Clare, his child, and Nanon, the party returned to Hangtown, taking Christie's gold with them.

A couple of days later the mangled remains of Jeff Blake were discovered in the mountains, but Carlo was not to be found.

Deadwood Dick Junior (our Humboldt Harry) and Old Avalanche, remained in Hangtown long enough to break up the counterfeiting business, and then, receiving rich rewards from Clare, set out for Deadwood, Dakota.

Chump, the captain's son, suddenly disappeared from Hangtown, and has not since been heard from.

In the future two weddings are probable, when Maurice Blake will lead the lovely May to the altar, and Ray Rodney will do the same by Christabel.

A consummation that came through Deadwood Dick Jr. and his Dog Detective.

THE END.

Edward L. Wheeler's

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